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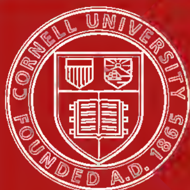

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A TRAGIC IDYL

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BY

PAUL BOURGET

AUTHOR OF "OUTRE-MER," ETC.

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CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
I.	Le "Tout Europe"	1
II.	The Cry of a Soul	40
III.	A Scruple	71
IV.	Lovers' Resolutions	107
V.	Afloat	143
VI.	Il Matrimonio Segreto	173
VII.	Olivier du Prat	214
VIII.	Friend and Mistress	251
IX.	Friend and Mistress — *continued*	287
X.	A Vow	335
XI.	Between Two Tragedies	365
XII.	The Dénouement.	400

A TRAGIC IDYL

CHAPTER I

LE "TOUT EUROPE"

THAT night (toward the end of February, 188–) a vast crowd was thronging the halls of the Casino at Monte Carlo. It was one of the momentary occasions, well known to all who have passed the winter season on the Corniche, when a sudden and prodigious afflux of composite humanity transfigures that place, ordinarily so vulgar with the brutal luxury of the people whom it satisfies. The gay madness that breaks out at Nice during the Carnival attracts to this little point of the Riviera the moving army of pleasure hunters and adventurers, while the beauty of the climate allures thousands of invalids and people weary of living, the victims of disease and of ill fortune; and on certain nights, like that on which this narrative begins, when the countless representatives of the various classes, scattered ordinarily along the coast, sud-

denly rush together into the gaming-house, their fantastic variety of character appears in all its startling incongruities, with the aspect of a cosmopolitan pandemonium, dazzling and sinister, deafening and tragical, ridiculous and painful, strewn with all the wrecks of luxury and vice of every country and of every class, the victims of every misfortune and disaster. In this stifling atmosphere, amid the glitter of insolent and ignoble wealth, the ancient monarchies were represented by three princes of the house of Bourbon, and the modern by two grand-nephews of Bonaparte, all five recognizable by their profiles, which were reproduced on hundreds of the gold and silver coins rolling before them on the green tables.

Neither these princes nor their neighbors noticed the presence at one of the tables of a man who had borne the title of King in one of the states improvised on the Balkan Peninsula. Men had fought for this man, men had died for him, but his royal interests seemed now to be restricted to the pasteboard monarchs on the table of *trente-et-quarante*. And king and princes, grand-nephews and cousins of emperors, in the promiscuity of this international resort, elbowed noblemen whose ancestors had served or betrayed their own; and these lords elbowed the sons of tradesmen, dressed like them, nourished like them, amused like them; and these *bourgeois* brushed against celebrated artists — here the most famous of our portrait paint-

ers, there a well-known singer, there an illustrious writer — while fashionable women mingled with this crowd in toilets which rivalled in splendor those of the *demi-monde*. And other men poured in continually, and other women, and especially others of the *demi-monde*. Through the door they streamed in endlessly, of all categories, from the creature with hungry eyes and the face of a criminal, in search of some fortunate gambler whose substance she might absorb as a spider does that of a fly, to the insolent and triumphant devourer of fortunes, who stakes twenty-five louis on every turn of the roulette and wears in her ears diamonds worth 30,000 f. These contrasts formed here and there a picture even more striking and significant; for example, between two of these venders of love, their complexion painted with ceruse and with rouge, their eyes depraved by luxury and greed, a young woman, almost a child, recently married and passing through Monte Carlo on her wedding journey, stretched forth her fresh, pretty face with a smile of innocence and roguish curiosity.

Further on, the amateurs of political philosophy might have seen one of the great Israelitish bankers of Paris placing his stake beside that of the bitterest of socialist pamphleteers. Not far from them a young consumptive, whose white face spotted with purple, hollow cheeks, burning eyes, and fleshless hands announced the fast approach of death, was seated beside a "sporting" man, whose ruddy complexion, broad

shoulders, and herculean muscles seemed to promise eighty years of life. The white glare of the electric globes along the ceiling and the walls, and the yellow light that radiated from the lamps suspended above the tables, falling upon the faces of this swarming crowd revealed differences no less extraordinary of race and origin. Russian faces, broad and heavy, powerfully, almost savagely Asiatic, were mingled with Italian physiognomies, of a Latin fineness and of a modelling that recalled the elegance of ancient portraits. German heads, thick, and, as it were, roughhewn, with an expression of mingled cunning and good nature, alternated with Parisian heads, intelligent and dissipated, which suggested the boulevard and the *couloirs* of the *Variétés*. Red and energetic profiles of Englishmen and Americans sketched their vigorous outlines, evincing the habit of exercise, long exposure to the tanning air and also the daily intoxication of alcohol; while exotic faces, by the animation of their eyes and mouths, by the warm tones of their complexions, evoked visions of other climes, of far-off countries, of fortunes made in the antipodes, in those mysterious regions which our fathers called simply *the isles*. And money, money, endless money flowed from this crowd on to the green tables, whose number had been increased since the previous day. Although the hands of the great clock over the entrance marked a quarter to ten, the visitors became at every moment more

numerous. It was not the sound of conversation that was audible in these rooms, but the noise of footsteps moving about the tables, which stood firm amid this surging crowd like flat rocks on the mounting sea, motionless under the lash of the waves. The noise of footsteps was accompanied by another no less continuous — the clinking of gold and silver coins, which one could hear falling, piling, separating, living, in fact, with the sonorous and rapid life which they have under the rake of the *croupier*. The rattle of the balls in the roulette rooms formed a mechanical accompaniment to the formulæ, mechanically repeated, in which the words "*rouge*" and "*noir*," "*pair*" and "*impair*," "*passe*" and "*manque*" recurred with oracular impassibility. And, still more monotonous, from the tables of *trente-et-quarante* which lacked the rattle of the wheel, other formulæ arose incessantly — "*Quatre, deux. Rouge gagne et la couleur — Cinq, neuf. Rouge perd, la couleur gagne — Deux, deux. Après —*" At the sight of the columns of napoleons and hundred-franc pieces rising and falling on the ten or twelve tables, the bank-notes of one hundred, five hundred, and a thousand francs, unfolded and heaped up; the full dress of the men, the jewels of the women, the evident prodigality of all these people, one felt the gaming-house vibrating with a frenzy other than that of loss and gain. One breathed in the fever of luxury, the excess and abuse of pleasure. On nights like this gold seems to have no longer any value, so

fast is it won and lost on these tables, so wildly is it spent in the hotels, restaurants, and villas which crowd around the Casino like the houses of a watering-place around the spring. The beauty of women is here too tempting and accessible, pleasure is too abundant, the climate too soft, comfort is too easy. The paradise of brutal refinement installed here on this flower-clad rock is hostile to calm enjoyment and to cool reflection. The giddiness which it imparts to the passing guest has its crisis of intensity, and this night was one of them. It had something of the Kermess about it, and of Babylonian furore. Nor did it lack even the *Mene, Tekel, Upharsin* of the Biblical feast, for the despatches posted on one of the columns in the vestibule recounted the bloody episode of a strike that had broken out since the previous day in the mining district of the North. The telegram told of the firing of the troops, of workmen killed, and of an engineer murdered for revenge. But who pictured in concrete images the details of this tragic despatch? Who in this crowd, more and more athirst for pleasure, realized its revolutionary menace? The gold and silver coins continued to roll, the bank-notes to unfold and quiver, the *croupiers* to cry "*Faîtes vos jeux*" and "*Rien ne va plus,*" the balls to spin around the wheels, the cards to fall on the green cloth, the rakes to grasp the money of the poor unfortunates, and each one to follow his mania for gambling or for luxury, his fancy for snob-

bery and vanity, or the caprice of his *ennui.* For how many different fancies this strange palace, with its doors like those of the Alhambra, served as the theatre. On this night of feverish excitement it was lending one of its divans to the preparatives for a most fantastic adventure, the mere announcement of which recalls the advertisements of the *Opéra Comique,* the music of our great-grandmothers, and the forgotten name of Cimarosa — a secret marriage.

The group of three persons who had been compelled to choose a corner of this mundane caravansary for that romantic conspiracy was composed of a young man and two women. The young man appeared to be thirty-two years old. That was also the age of one of the women, who was, as they say in America, the chaperon of the other, a girl ten years younger. To complete the paradoxical character of this matrimonial conference in the long room that separates the roulette halls from those of the *trente-et-quarante,* it is only necessary to add that the young girl, an American, was in reality chaperoning the official chaperon, and that the project of this secret marriage did not concern her in the least. She was seated at the end of the divan, unmistakably a sentinel, while her friend and the young man talked together. Her beautiful brown eyes fearlessly scrutinized the passing crowd with the energy and confidence natural to a girl of the United States, accustomed from her childhood to realize her individuality, and

who, if she dispenses with certain conventionalities, at least knows why, and is not ashamed of it. She was beautiful, with that beauty already so ripe which, accentuated by a toilet almost too fashionable, gives to so many American women the air of a creature on exhibition. Her features were delicate, even too small for the powerful moulding of her face and the strength of her chin. On her thick, chestnut-colored hair she wore a round hat of black velvet, with a rim too wide and with plumes too high, which rose in the back over a *cachepeigne* of artificial orchids. It was the hat of a young girl and a hat for the afternoon, but, in its excess, it was quite in keeping with her dress of glossy cloth and her corsage, or rather cuirass, trimmed with silver, which the most celebrated *couturier* in Paris had designed for her. Thus adorned, and with the superabundance of jewellery that accompanied this toilet, Miss Florence Marsh — that was her name — might have passed for anything in the world except what she really was — the most straightforward and honest of young girls, helping to prepare for the conjugal happiness of a woman equally honest and irreproachable. This woman was the Marquise Andryana Bonnacorsi, a Venetian by birth, belonging to the ancient and illustrious dogal family of the Navagero. Her dress, though it, too, came from Paris, bore the marks of that taste for tinsel peculiar to Italian finery, which gives it that *fufu* air, to employ an untrans-

latable term, with which our provincial *bourgeoisie* ridicules these unsubstantial ornaments. A flock of butterflies in black jet rested upon her black satin dress. The same butterflies appeared on the satin of her small shoes and among the pink roses of her hat, above her beautiful light hair of that red gold so dear to the painters of her country. The voluptuous splendor of her complexion, the nobility of her somewhat heavy features, the precocious development of her bust accorded well with her origin, and even more the soft blue of her eyes, in which there floated all the passion and languor of the lagoons. The light of her blue eyes enveloped the young man who was now speaking to her, and with whom she was visibly in love, madly in love. He, in the full maturity of his strength, justified that adoration more sensual than sentimental. He was a remarkable type of the manly beauty peculiar to our Provence, which attests that for centuries it was the land where the Roman race left its deepest imprint. His short, black hair, over the straight, white forehead; his pointed, slightly curling beard, the firm line of his nose, and the deep curve of his brows, gave him a profile like that of a medal, which would have been severe, if all the energy of a born lover had not burned in his soft eyes, and all the gayety of the South sparkled in his smile. His robust and supple physique could be divined even under his coat and white waistcoat, and these signs of animal health were so evident,

his somewhat excessive gestures seemed to evince such exuberance, such perfect joy in living, that one failed to notice how impenetrable were those ardent eyes, how shrewd the smiling mouth, and how all the signs of cunning calculation were imprinted on that face, so reflective under its mobility.

Two kinds of men thus excel in utilizing their defects to the profit of their interest — the German, who shelters his diplomacy behind his apparent dulness, and the Provençal, who conceals his beneath his instinctive petulance, and who appears, as he really is on the surface, an enthusiast, while he is executing some plan as solidly and coldly realistic as though he were a Scotchman of the Border. Who would have guessed that on this lounge of the Casino, while he talked so gayly with his habitual abaudon, the Viscount de Corancez — he belonged to a family near Tarascon, of the least authentic title to nobility — was just bringing to a successful conclusion the most audacious, the most improbable, and the most carefully studied of intrigues? But who in all the world suspected the real character of this "careless Marius," as he was called by his father, the old vine-grower of Tarascon, whom his compatriots had seen die in despair at the eternal debts of his son? Certainly not these men of Tarascon and the Rhone valley, who had seen the beautiful vines, so well cared for and regenerated by the father, disappear, vineyard by vineyard, to satisfy the follies of the heir at Paris.

'or was his real character known to the companions
f his folly, the Casal, the Vardes, the Machault, all
1e noted men of pleasure of the time, who had clearly
ecognized the sensuality and vanity of the Southerner,
ut not his cunning, and who had classed him once
nd for all among the provincials destined to disap-
ear after shining like a meteor in the firmament of
'aris. No one had perceived in this joyous compan-
on, this gourmand ready for every pleasure, for a
ipper, for cards, for a love-affair, the practical phi-
osopher who should when the hour arrived nimbly
hange his weapon. And the hour had struck several
ionths ago; of the 600,000 f. left him by his father
carcely 40,000 remained, and this winter the supple
outherner had begun to execute the programme of
is thirty-second year — a successful marriage. The
riginality of this project lay in the peculiar condi-
ions he affixed to it. In the first place, he had per-
eived that, even if enriched by the most fortunate
iarriage, his situation at Paris would never be what
e wished. His defeat at an aristocratic club, to
'hich he had attempted to gain admittance, trusting
) certain influence imprudently offered and accepted,
ad shown him the difference between mere comrade-
hip and a solid standing in society. Two or three
isits to Nice had revealed the cosmopolitan world
) him, and, with his superior cleverness, he had
ivined its resources. He had resolved to marry

some stranger who had a good standing in the society of Europe. He dreamed of passing the winter on the coast, the summer in the Alps, the hunting season in Scotland, the autumn on his wife's estate, and a few festive weeks in Paris in the spring. This plan of existence presupposed that his wife should not be a mere young girl. Corancez wished her to be a widow, older than himself if need be, and yet still beautiful in her autumn. As he based his hopes of success mainly upon his youthful and handsome appearance, it was desirable that the matrimonial labors should not be too severe. An Italian Marquise, belonging by birth to the highest Venetian aristocracy, the widow of a nobleman, left with an income of 200,000 f., irreproachable in character, and devotedly religious, which would save her from any love-affairs unsanctioned by marriage, and nevertheless led by the influence of her Anglomaniac brother into cosmopolitan life, was the ideal of all his hopes, embodied as though by enchantment. But all the apples of Hesperides have their dragon, and the mythical monster was in this case represented by the brother, the Count Alvise Navagero, a doubtful personage under his snobbish exterior, who well understood how to keep for his own use the millions of his deceased brother-in-law, Francesco Bonnacorsi. How had the Provençal trickery eluded the Venetian watchfulness? Even to this day, when those events are things of the past, the

five o'clock *habitués* of the yacht club at Cannes confess themselves unable to explain it, such astuteness had the ingenious Corancez employed in preparing the mine without arousing a suspicion of his subterranean labor. And four short months had sufficed. Through an inner conflict of emotions and of scruples, of timidity and passion, the Marquise Andryana had been brought to accept the idea of a secret marriage, finding no other way to satisfy the ardor with which she now burned, the exigencies of her religion, and her fear of her brother, which grew with her love for Corancez. She trembled now at the thought of it, although she knew this redoubtable guardian to be engaged in risking at a near table the thousand-franc notes she had given to be rid of him. Alvise was staking his money with the thoughtfulness and care of an old gambler who had already been once ruined by cards, unaware that within a few yards of him another game that concerned him was being played, and a fortune was at stake which he, like a perfect parasite, considered as his own. It was not simply at stake, it was lost; for the romantic plan invented by Corancez to fasten an inseparable bond between the Marquise and himself was about to be consummated; the two lovers had just settled upon the place and time and details.

"And now," concluded Marius, "*rien ne va plus*, as they say in roulette. We have only to wait patiently

for two weeks. — I believe we have not forgotten anything."

"But I am so afraid of some mischance," said the Marquise Andryana, softly shaking her blond head, the black butterflies trembling on her hat. "If Marsh changes the date of his yachting party?"

"You will telegraph me," said Corancez, "and I will meet you at Genoa another day. — Anyhow, Marsh will not change the date. It was the Baroness Ely who chose the 14th, and the wife of an archduke, though morganatic, is not to be disappointed, even were Marsh such a democrat as the western ranchman, who said once, with a strong handshake to an Infanta of Spain, 'Very glad to meet you, Infanta.' It was Marsh himself who told me this, and you remember his disgust, don't you, Miss Florence?"

"My uncle is as punctual in his pleasures as in his business," replied the American girl; "and since the Baroness Ely is in the party — "

"But if Alvise changes his mind and sails with us?" said the Venetian.

"Ah, Marquise, Marquise," Corancez cried, "what dismal forebodings. You forget that the Count Alvise is invited to the *Dalilah*, the yacht of Lord Herbert Bohun, to meet H. R. H. *Alberto Edoardo*, Prince of Wales, and Navagero miss that appointment? Never."

In light mockery at his future brother-in-law's Anglomania, he imitated the British accent which the

Count affected, with a mimicry so gay that the Marquise could not help exclaiming:—

"*Che carino!*"

And with her fan she stroked the hand of her *fiancé*. Notwithstanding his pleasantry at the expense of the domestic tyrant, at which the Marquise was ready to smile, much as she trembled in his presence, Corancez seemed to think the conversation dangerous, for he attempted to bring it to an end:—

"I do not wish my happiness to cost you a moment of worry, and it will not. I can predict hour by hour everything that will take place on the 14th, and you will see if your friend is not a prophet. You know what a lucky line I have here," he added, showing the palm of his hand, "and you know what I have read in your own pretty hand."

It was one of his tricks, and at the same time one of his own superstitions, to play the rôle of a parlor wizard and chiromancer, and he continued with that tone of certitude that imparts firmness to the irresolute:—

"You will have a magnificent passage to Genoa. You will find me you know where with Dom Fortunato Lagumina, for the old *abbé* is eager to act as chaplain in this *matrimonio segreto.* You will return to Cannes without any one in the world suspecting that *Mme. la Marquise Bonnacorsi* has become *Mme. la Vicomtesse de Corancez,* excepting the Vicomte, who will find some

way of making our little *combinazione* acceptable to the good Alvise. Until then you will write to me at Genoa, *poste restante,* and I to you, in care of our dear Miss Florence."

"Whose name is also Miss Prudence," said the young girl, "and she thinks you are talking too long for conspirators. Beware of pickpockets," she added in English.

This was the signal agreed upon to warn them of the approach of some acquaintance.

"Bah, that pickpocket is not dangerous," said Corancez, following the direction of Miss Marsh's fan, and recognizing the person who had attracted her attention. "It is Pierre Hautefeuille, my old friend. He doesn't even notice us. Marquise, do you wish to see a lover desperate at not finding his loved one? And to think that I should be like him," he added, in a lower tone, "if you were not here to intoxicate me with your beauty." Then, raising his voice, "Watch him sit down on that lounge in the corner, unconscious of the three pairs of eyes that are observing him. A ruined gambler might blow out his brains beside him and he would not turn his head. He would not even hear."

The young man had at this moment an air of absorption so profound, so complete, that he justified the laughing raillery of Corancez. If the plot of a secret marriage, mapped out in these surroundings and amid this crowd, appear strangely paradoxical, the rev-

eries of this man whom Corancez had called his "old friend"—they had been at school together in Paris for two years—were still stranger and more paradoxical. The contrast was too strong between the crowd swarming around Pierre Hautefeuille and the hypnotism that appeared to be upon him. Evidently the two thousand people scattered through these rooms ceased to exist for him as soon as he had discovered the absence of a certain person. And who could this be if not a woman? The disappointed lover had fallen, rather than seated himself, upon the lounge in front of Corancez and his fellow-conspirators. With his elbow on the arm of the divan, he pressed his hand over his forehead, disconsolately. His slender fingers, pushing back his hair, disclosed the noble outline of his brow, revealed his profile, the slightly arched nose, the severe lips, whose proud expression would have been almost fierce were it not for the tender softness of his eyes. This look of strangely intense meditation in a face so exhausted and pale, with its small, dark mustache, gave him a resemblance to the classic portrait of Louis XIII. in his youth. His narrow shoulders, his slightly angular limbs, the evident delicacy of his whole body indicated one of those fragile organizations whose force lies wholly in the nerves, a physique with no vital power of resistance, ravaged eternally by emotions, down to the obscure and quivering centre of consciousness, and as easily exhausted by sentiment as muscular natures are

by action and sensation. Although Pierre Hautefeuille was, in his dress and manner, indistinguishable from Corancez and the countless men of pleasure in the rooms, yet either his physiognomy was very deceptive or he did not belong to the same race morally as these cavaliers of the white waistcoat and the varnished pumps, who encircled the ladies dressed like *demi-mondaines*, and the *demi-mondaines* dressed like ladies, or crowded around the tables, amid the throng of gentlemen and swindlers. The melancholy in the curve of his lips and in his tired eyelids revealed a sadness, not momentary, but habitual, an abiding gloom, and if it were true that he had come to this place in search of a woman whom he loved, this sadness was too naturally explained. He must suffer from the life that this woman was leading, from her surroundings, her pleasures, her habits, her inconsistencies — suffer even to the extent of illness, and, perhaps, without knowing why, for he had not the eyes that judge of one they love. In any case, if he was, as Corancez said, a lover, he was certainly not a successful one. His face showed neither the pride nor the bitterness of a man to whom the loved woman has given herself, and who believes in her or suspects her. Even the simplicity with which he indulged his reveries in the midst of this crowd and on the lounge of a gaming-house was enough to prove a youthfulness of heart and imagination rare at his age. Corancez's companions were struck at the same time with this

naïve contrast, and each made to herself a little exclamation in her native tongue:—

"*Com'è simpatico,*" murmured the Italian.

"*Oh, you dear boy,*" said Miss Florence.

"And with whom is he in love?" they asked together.

"I could give you a hundred to guess," said Corancez, "but you could not. Never mind. It is not a secret that was confided to me; I discovered it myself, so I am not bound to keep it. Well, the *sympathetic*, dear boy has chosen to fall in love with our friend Madame de Carlsberg, the Baroness Ely, herself. She has been here for six days with Madame Brion, and this poor boy has not been able to remain away from her. He wished to see her without her knowing. He must have been wandering around the Villa Brion, waiting for her to come out. See the dust on his shoes and trousers. Then, having doubtless heard that the Baroness spends her evenings here, he has come to watch her. He has not found her in this crowd. That is how we love," he added, with a look at the Marquise, "when we do love."

"And the Baroness?"

"You wish to know whether or not the Baroness loves him? Luckily you and Miss Florence believe in hands, for it is only through my talent for fortune-telling that I can answer you. You are interested? Well," he continued, with his peculiar air of seriousness and mystification, "she has in her hand a red

heart-line, which indicates a violent passion, and there is a mark that places this passion near her thirtieth year, which is just her present age. By the way, did I never tell you that she has also on the Mount of Jupiter, there, a perfect star — one of whose rays forms a cross of union?"

"And that means?" inquired the American girl, with the interest that the people of the most materialistic country have for all questions of a supernatural order, for everything that pertains to what they call "spiritualism."

"Marriage with a prince," replied the Southerner.

There was a minute of silence, during which Corancez continued to watch Pierre Hautefeuille with great attention. Suddenly his eyes sparkled with an idea that had just occurred to him: —

"Marquise. The witness we need for the ceremony at Genoa. Why not have him? I think he would bring us good luck."

"That is so," said Madame Bonnacorsi; "it is delightful to meet with a face like that at certain moments of one's life. But would it be wise?"

"If I propose him to you," Corancez replied, "you may be sure that I answer for his discretion. We have known each other since our boyhood, Hautefeuille and I; he is solid gold. And how much safer than a hired witness, who could at any time betray us."

"Will he accept?"

"I shall know to-morrow before leaving Cannes, if you have no objection to my choosing him. Only," the young man added, "in that case it might be better to have him on the yacht."

"I'll attend to that," said Miss Marsh. "But how and when introduce him to my uncle?"

"This evening," Corancez replied, "while we are all in the train for Cannes. I will secure our lover at once, and not leave him till we are in the train — especially," he added, rising, "as we have been talking here too long, and though the walls have no ears, they have eyes. My dear," he murmured, passionately pressing the little hand of Madame Bonnacorsi, who also had risen, "I shall not talk with you again before the great day; give me a word to carry with me and live with until then."

"God guard you, *anima mia*," she answered, in her grave voice, revealing all the passion that this skilful personage had inspired in her.

"It is written here," he said gayly, opening his hand, "and here," he added, placing his hand upon his heart.

Then, turning to the young girl: —

"Miss Flossie, when you need some one to go through fire for you, a word, and he will be ready *right away.*"

While Miss Marsh laughed at this joke upon one of the little idioms of the Yankee language, the Marquise

followed him with the look of a passionate woman whose heart goes out to every motion of the man she loves. The Provençal moved toward his old friend with such grace and suppleness of carriage that the American girl could not refrain from remarking it. The young girls of that energetic race, so fond of exercise and so accustomed to the easy familiarities of the tennis court, are frankly and innocently sensible to the physical beauty of men.

"How handsome he is, your Corancez," she exclaimed to the Marquise. "To me he is *the* Frenchman, the type that I used to picture to myself in Marionville when I read the novels of Dumas. How happy you will be with him."

"So happy," the Italian murmured, but added, with a melancholy foreboding, "yet God will not permit it."

"God permits everything that one wishes, if one wishes it hard enough, and it is just," Miss Florence interrupted.

"No. I have had to tell Alvise too many lies. I shall be punished."

"If you feel that way," said the American, "why don't you tell your brother? Do you wish me to do it? Five minutes of conversation, and you will not have a single lie on your conscience. You have the right to marry. The money is yours. What do you fear?"

"You don't know Alvise," she said, and her face had

a look of actual terror. "What if he should provoke him to a duel and kill him? No; let us do as we have planned, and may the Madonna protect us."

She closed her eyes a moment, sighing. Florence Marsh watched her with amazement. The independent Anglo-Saxon could never understand the hypnotic terror that Navagero threw over his sister. The thoughts of the Marquise had wandered back to Cannes. She saw the little chapel of Notre Dame des Pins, where every day for months a mass had been said in order to find pardon for her falsehoods, and she saw the altar where she and Corancez had knelt and made a vow that they would go together to Loretto as soon as their marriage was announced. The Provençal believed in the Madonna, just as he believed in the lines of the hand, with that demi-scepticism and demi-faith possible only to those southern natures, so childish and so cunning, so complex with their instinctive simplicity, so sincere in their boastfulness, and forever superstitious in even their coldest calculations. He saw in the scruples of Madame Bonnacorsi the surest guarantee of his success; for, once in love, a woman of such religious ardor and such passionate intensity would end necessarily in marriage. And, besides, the tapers burning in the little church at Cannes assured him in regard to the brother, whose suspicions he had evaded, but whom he knew to be capable of anything in order not to lose the fortune of

his sister. So, unlike Miss Marsh, he was not astonished at the fears of his *fiancée*. But what could the fury of Alvise avail against a union consummated in due form before a genuine priest, lacking only the civil consecration, which mattered nothing to the pious Marquise? However, faithful to the old adage that two precautions are better than one, Corancez, in view of the eventual explanation, was not displeased at the prospect of having at his wedding a man of his own set. Why had he not thought before of his old friend of Louis-le-Grand, whom he had found again at Cannes, just as candid and simple-hearted as in the days when they sat side by side on the benches of the school? Corancez had recognized the candor and simplicity of his old acquaintance at the first touch of his hand. He had recognized them also in the innocent impulsiveness with which Hautefeuille had become enamoured of the Baroness Ely de Carlsberg. He had revealed this passion to his two interlocutors; but he had not told them that he believed Madame de Carlsberg to be as much in love with the young man as he was with her. However, he might justly have boasted of his perspicacity. It had been keen in this case, as in so many others. But, perspicacious as he was, the Southerner did not realize that in making use of his discovery he was about to turn the *opéra bouffe* of his marriage with Madame Bonnacorsi into a dramatic episode. In speaking to himself of

his famous line of luck, he always said, "Only gay things come to me." It seems, in fact, that there are two distinct types of men, and their eternal coexistence proves the legitimacy of the two standpoints taken since the world began by the painters of human nature — comedy and tragedy. Every man partakes of one or the other, and rare is the destiny in which both are mingled. For a whole group of persons — of whom Corancez was one — the most romantic affairs end in a vaudeville; while for the other class, to which, alas, Pierre Hautefeuille belonged, the simplest adventures result in tragedy. If the first love sincerely, never does the loved woman do them wrong. A smile is always ready to mingle with their tears. The others are given to poignant emotions, to cruel complications; all their idyls are tragic idyls. And truly, to see these two young men side by side, as Corancez laid his hand on Hautefeuille's shoulder, to arouse him from his reverie, these two eternal types — the hero of comedy and the hero of tragedy — appeared in all their contrast — the one robust and laughing, with bright eyes and sensual lips, sure of himself, and throwing around him, as it were, an atmosphere of good humor; the other frail and delicate, his eyes heavy with thought, ready to suffer at the least contact with life, scarcely able to conceal a quiver of irritation at the sudden interrupting of his dreams.

His irritation quickly vanished; when he had risen and Corancez had taken him familiarly by the arm, the thought occurred to him that perhaps he might hear from his old friend some news of the Baroness Ely de Carlsberg, whom in fact he had been vainly seeking at Monte Carlo. And the cunning Southerner began: —

"How sly of you to come here without letting me know. And how foolish. You might have dined comfortably with me. I had this evening the prettiest table in Monte Carlo: Madame de Carlsberg, Madame de Chésy, Miss Marsh, Madame Bonnacorsi. You know all four of them, I believe. You would not have been bored."

"I didn't know until five o'clock that I should take the train at six," said Hautefeuille.

"I understand," said Corancez; "you are sitting comfortably in your room at Cannes. You hear voices, like Jeanne d'Arc, only not quite the same; '*Rien ne va plus. Messieurs, faîtes vos jeux;*' and the bank-notes begin to pant in your purse, the napoleons to dance in your pocket, and before you know it you find yourself in front of the green cloth. Have you won?"

"I never play," Pierre answered.

"You will before long. But, tell me, do you often come here?"

"This is the first time."

"And you have been all winter at Cannes. I can still hear Du Prat calling you Mademoiselle Pierrette. You are too good and too young. Look out for the reaction. And, speaking of Du Prat, have you heard from him?"

"He is still on the Nile with his wife," Hautefeuille replied, "and he insists upon my joining them."

"And you wouldn't go and finish the wedding journey with them. That was even wiser than refusing to play. That is the result of not spending one's honeymoon here on the coast, like everybody else. They get bored with each other even before the house-warming."

"But I assure you that Olivier is very happy," Hautefeuille said, with an emphasis that showed his affection for the man of whom Corancez had spoken so lightly; then, to avoid any further comments upon his absent friend: "But, frankly, do you find this society so amusing?" And he motioned toward the crowd of players around the tables who were growing more and more excited. "It is the paradise of the *rastaquouères*."

"That's the prejudice of the Parisian," said the Provençal, who still felt bitter against the great city on account of his defeat at the most desirable of clubs. He continued to vent his bitterness; "*Rastaquouères*. When you have uttered that anathema, you think that you have settled the question; and by dint of repeat-

ing it, you blind yourself to the fact that you Parisians are becoming the provincials of Europe. Yes, you no longer produce the really great aristocrats; they are now the English, the Russians, the Americans, the Italians, who have as much elegance and wit as you Parisians, but with real temperament beneath their elegance which you have never had, and with the gayety which you have no more. And the women of these foreign lands. Contrast them with that heartless, senseless doll, that vanity in *papier mâché*, the Parisian woman."

"In the first place, I am not at all a Parisian," interrupted Pierre Hautefeuille; "I am rather a provincial of provincials. And then, I grant the second part of your paradox; some of these women are remarkable in their fineness and culture, in their brightness and charm. And yet is their charm ever equal, not to that of the Parisienne, I agree, but to that of the real Frenchwoman, with her good sense and her grace, her tact, her intelligence — the poetry of perfect measure and taste?"

He had been thinking aloud, unconscious of the slight smile that passed, almost invisibly, over the ironical lips of his interlocutor. The "Sire" de Corancez was not the man to engage himself in a discussion for which he cared no more than he did for the Pharaohs whose tombs served as the background of their friend's honeymoon. Knowing Hautefeuille's attachment to

this man, he had brought up his name in order to give to their conversation an accent of ease and confidence. Hautefeuille's remarks about foreign women, confirming the diagnosis of his love for Madame de Carlsberg, recalled Corancez to the real purpose of this interview. He and his companion were at this moment near the table of *trente-et-quarante,* at which was seated one of the persons most involved in the execution of his project, the uncle of Miss Marsh, one of the most celebrated of American railroad magnates, Richard Carlyle Marsh, familiarly known as Dickie Marsh, he who was destined, on a fixed day, to lend his yacht unwittingly to the wedding voyage of Madame Bonnacorsi. It was in his company that Corancez was to return with his friend to Cannes, and he wished to interest Hautefeuille in the Yankee potentate in order to facilitate his introduction.

"No," he continued, "I assure you that this foreign colony contains men who are as interesting as their wives. We are apt to overlook this fact, because they are not so pretty to look at. — I see one at this table whom I shall introduce. We met his niece the other day at the Baroness's. He is Marsh, the American. I wish you to see him playing — Good, some one is rising. Don't lose me, we may profit by this and get to the front of the crowd."

And the adroit Southerner managed to push himself and Hautefeuille through the sudden opening of the

spectators so that in a moment they were stationed right behind the chair of the *croupier,* who was in the act of turning the cards. They could command the whole table and every movement of the players.

"Now, look," Corancez whispered. "There is Marsh."

"That little gray-faced man with the pile of bank-notes in front of him?"

"That's the man. He is not fifty years old, and he is worth ten million dollars. At eighteen he was a conductor of a tramway at Cleveland, Ohio. Such as you see him now, he has founded a city of fifty thousand inhabitants, named after his wife, Marionville, and he has made his fortune literally with his own hands, since they say that he himself, with a few workmen, built on the prairie the first miles of his company's railroad, which is now more than two thousand miles long. Observe those hands of his. You can see them so well against the green cloth; they are strong and not common. You see the knotty knuckles, which means reflection, judgment, calculation. The ends of the fingers are a little too spatulated; that means an excessive activity, the need of continual movement and a tendency toward mournful thoughts. I will tell you some day about the death of his daughter. You see the thumb; the two joints are large and of equal length; that means will and logic combined. It curves backward; that is prodigality. Marsh has given a hundred thousand dollars to the

University of Marionville. And notice his movements, what decision, what calm, what freedom from nervousness. Isn't that a man?"

"He is certainly a man with an abundance of money," said Hautefeuille, amused by his friend's enthusiasm, "and a man who is not afraid of losing it."

"And that other, two places from Marsh, has he no money, then? That personage with a rosette and a red, sinister face. It is Brion, the financier, the director of the Banque Générale. Have you not met him at the house of Madame de Carlsberg? His wife is the intimate friend of Baroness Ely. Millionaire that he is, look at his hands, how nervous and greedy. You observe that his thumb is ball-shaped; that is the mark of crime. If that rascal is not a robber! And his manner of clutching the bank-notes, doesn't it show his brutality? And beside him you may see the play of a fool, Chésy, with his smooth and pointed fingers, the two middle ones of equal length, that of Saturn and that of the Sun. That is the infallible sign of a player who will ruin himself, especially if he is no more logical than this one. And he thinks himself shrewd! He enters into business relations with Brion, who pays court to Madame de Chésy. You may see the inevitable end."

"The pretty Madame de Chésy?" exclaimed Hautefeuille, "and that abominable Brion? Impossible."

"I do not say that it has happened; I say that, given this imbecile of a husband, with his taste for gambling here and at the Bourse, there is a great danger that it will happen some day. You see," he added, "that this place is not so commonplace when you open your eyes; and you will acknowledge that of the two Parisians and the *rastaquouère* whom we have seen, the interesting man is the *rastaquouère.*"

While Corancez was speaking, the two young men had left their post of observation. He now led his companion toward the roulette rooms, adding these words, which made Hautefeuille quiver from head to foot: —

"If you have no objection we might look for Madame de Carlsberg, whom I left at one of these tables, and of whom I wish to take my leave. Fancy, she hates to have her friends near her while she is playing. But she must have lost all her money by this time."

"Does she play very much?" asked Hautefeuille, who now had no more desire to leave his friend than at first he had to follow him.

"As she does everything," Corancez answered, "capriciously and to beguile her *ennui.* And her marriage justifies her only too well. You know the prince? No? But you know his habits. Is it worth while to belong to the house of Hapsburg-Lorraine, to be called the Archduke Henry Francis, and to have a wife like that, if one is to profess the opinions of

an anarchist, and spend sixteen hours out of the twenty-four in a laboratory, burning one's hands and beard and eyes over furnaces, and receive the friends of the Baroness in the way he does?"

"Then," said Hautefeuille, his arm trembling a little, as he asked his naïve question, "you think she is not happy?"

"You have only to look at her," replied Corancez, who, rising on his toes, had just recognized Madame de Carlsberg.

It was the one table that Pierre had not approached, on account of the crowd, which had been thicker around it than elsewhere. He signed to his companion that he was not tall enough to see over the mass of shoulders and heads; and Corancez, preceding his timid friend, began again to glide through the living wall of spectators, whose curiosity was evidently excited to the highest degree. The young men understood why, when, after several minutes of breathless struggling, they succeeded in gaining once more the place behind the *croupier* which they had had at the table of *trente-et-quarante.* There was taking place, in fact, one of those extraordinary events which become a legend on the coast and spread their fame through Europe and the two Americas; and Hautefeuille was shocked to discover that the heroine of this occasion was none else than the Baroness Ely, whose adorable name echoed in his heart with the sweetness of music.

Yes, it was indeed Madame de Carlsberg who was the focus of all the eyes in this *blasé* multitude, and she employed in the caprices of her extravagant play the same gentle yet imposing grace that had inspired the young man with his passionate idolatry. Ah, she was so proud even at this moment, and so beautiful. Her delicate bust, the only part of her body he could see, was draped in a corsage of violet silk, covered with a black plaited *mousseline de soie,* with sleeves of the same stuff which seemed to tremble at every movement. A set of Danube pearls, enormous and set with brilliants, formed a clasp for this corsage, over which fell a thin watch-chain of gold studded with various stones. She wore a diminutive hat, composed of two similar wings, spangled with silver and with violet sequins. This stylish trinket, resting on her black hair, divided simply into two heavy folds, contrasted, like her dress and like her present occupation, with the character of her physiognomy. Her face was one of those, so rare in our aging civilization, imprinted with *la grande beauté,* the beauty that is unaffected by age, for it lies in the essential lines of the features, the shape of the head, the form of the brow, the curve of the chin, the droop of the eyelids. To those who knew of the Greek blood in her veins, the classic nobility of her face explained itself. Her father, General de Sallach, when aide-de-camp of the Commander-in-Chief at Zara, had married for love a

Montenegrin girl at Bocca da Cattaro, who was the daughter of a woman of Salonica. This blood alone could have moulded a face at the same time so magnificent and so delicate, whose warm pallor added to its vague suggestion of the Orient. But her eyes lacked the happy and passionate lustre of the East. They were of an indefinable color, brown verging upon yellow, with something dim about them, as though perpetually obscured by an inner distress. One read in them an *ennui* so profound, a lassitude so incurable, that after perceiving this expression one began in spite of one's self to pity this woman apparently so fortunate, and to feel an impulse to obey her slightest whim if so her admirable face might lose that look, if but for a second. Yet doubtless it was one of those effects of the physiognomy which signify nothing of the soul, for her eyes retained the same singular expression at this moment while she abandoned herself to the wild fancies of the play. She must have gained an enormous sum since Corancez had left her, for a pile of thousand-franc notes — fifty perhaps — lay before her, and many columns of twenty-franc and hundred-franc pieces. Her gloved hands, armed with a little rake, manipulated this mass of money with dexterous grace. The cause of the feverish curiosity around her was that she risked at every turn the maximum stake: nine napoleons on a single number, that of her age, thirty-one, an equal number of napo-

leons on the squares, and six thousand francs on the black. The alternations of loss and gain were so great, and she met them with such evident impassibility, that she naturally had become the centre of interest. Oblivious to the comments that were whispered around her, she seemed scarcely to interest herself even in the ball that bounded over the numbered compartments.

"I assure you that she is an archduchess," said one.

"She is a Russian princess," declared another; "there is no one but a Russian for that game there."

"Let her win but three or four times and the bank is broken."

"She can't win, it is only the color that saves her."

"I believe in her luck. I will play her number."

"I'll play against her. Her luck is turning."

"Her hands," Corancez whispered to Hautefeuille. "Look at her hands; even under her gloves, the hands of the genuine aristocrat. See the others beside her, the motion of those greedy and nervous paws. All those fingers are plebeian after you have seen hers. But I am afraid we have brought her bad luck. Red and 7: she has lost— Oh, lost again. That means twenty-five thousand francs. If the word were not too vulgar to apply to such a pretty woman, I would say, 'What stomach!' She is going on."

The young woman continued to distribute her gold and bank-notes upon the same number, the same squares, and upon the black, and it seemed as though

neither the numbers, nor the squares, nor the black would ever appear again. A few more turns, and the columns of twenty-franc and hundred-franc pieces had disappeared as into a crucible, and, six by six, the bank-notes had gone under the rake to join the pile heaped up before the *croupier*. A quarter of an hour had scarcely elapsed since the arrival of Corancez and Hautefeuille, and the Baroness Ely had nothing before her but a little empty purse and a Russian cigarette case of gold inlaid with niello and with sapphires, rubies, and diamonds. The young woman weighed the case in her hand, while another turn of the wheel brought up the red again.

It was the eleventh time that this color had won. Suddenly, with the same air of indifference, she turned to her neighbor, a large man of about fifty years, with a square head and wearing spectacles, who had abandoned his book of calculations to play simply against her. He had before him now a mass of gold and bank-notes.

"Monsieur," she said, handing him the case, "will you give me a thousand francs for this box?"

She spoke loud enough for Corancez and Hautefeuille, who had approached, to hear this strange and unexpected question.

"But we should be the ones to lend her the money," said Pierre.

"I should not advise you to offer it," the other

replied. "She is very much of an archduchess when she chooses, and I fancy she would not receive us well. However, there will be plenty of usurers to buy the case at that price, if the man in the spectacles does not accept. — He is speaking German. He doesn't understand. — Well, what did I tell you?"

As though to support Corancez's pretensions to prophecy, just as Madame de Carlsberg was replying to her neighbor in German, the hook-nose of a jewel merchant penetrated the crowd, a hand held out the thousand-franc note, and the gold case disappeared. The Baroness did not deign even to glance at this personage, who was one of the innumerable money-lenders that practise a vagrant usury around the tables. She took the bank-note, and twisted it a moment without unfolding it. She waited until the red had appeared twice more; seemed to hesitate; then, with the end of her rake, pushed the note toward the *croupier*, saying: —

"On the red."

The ball spun round again, and this time it was the black. Baroness Ely picked up her fan and her empty purse, and rose. In the movement of the crowd, while he was endeavoring to extricate himself in order to reach her, Corancez suddenly noticed that he had lost Hautefeuille.

"The awkwardness of that innocent boy," he murmured, while waiting for Madame de Carlsberg.

If the vanity of speaking to the wife — even morganatic — of an archduke of Austria had not absorbed him at this moment, he might have observed his companion making his way to the purchaser of the jewel so fantastically sold. And perhaps he would have found the bargain very clever which was made with this innocent boy, had he seen him take from his pocket-book two bank-notes and receive from the usurer the case which had a few moments ago sparkled on the table before the Baroness. The usurer had sold the jewel to the lover for twice the sum that he had paid. Such is the beginning of great business houses.

CHAPTER II

THE CRY OF A SOUL

IF Pierre Hautefeuille's action had escaped the malicious eyes of Corancez, it had not, however, passed unperceived. Another person had seen the Baroness Ely sell the gold box, and the young man buy it; and this person was one whom the unfortunate lover should have most feared. For to be seen by her was to be seen by Madame de Carlsberg herself, as the witness of the two successive sales was no other than Madame Brion, the confidante of Baroness Ely, residing at the same villa, and sure to report what she had seen. But to explain the singular interest with which Madame Brion had observed these two scenes, and the attitude with which she was about to speak of it to her friend, it is necessary to relate the circumstances that had caused so close an intimacy between the wife of a Parisian financier of such low birth as Horace Brion, and a noble lady of the European Olympus, who figured in the Almanach de Gotha among the Imperial family of Austria. The peculiarity of the cosmopolitan world, the trait that gives it its

psychological picturesqueness, in spite of the banal character inevitable to a society composed of the rich and the idle, is the constant surprises of connections like this. This society serves as the point of intersection for destinies that have started from the widest extremities of the social world. One may see there the interplay of natures so dissimilar, often so hostile, that their simplest emotions have a savor of strangeness, the poetry of unfamiliar things. Just as the love of Pierre Hautefeuille, this Frenchman so profoundly, so completely French, for a foreigner so charming as the Baroness Ely, with a charm so novel, so difficult for the young man to analyze, was destined to occupy a place of such importance in his sentimental life, so the friendship between the Baroness Ely and Louise Brion could not fail to be a thing of special and peculiar value in their lives, although its material circumstances were, like everything in the cosmopolitan world, as natural in their details as they were strange in their results.

This friendship, like most lasting affections, began early, when the two women were but sixteen. They had ended their girlhood together in the intimacy of a convent, which is usually terminated at the entrance into society. But when these attachments endure, when they survive through absence, unaffected by difference of surroundings, or by new engagements, they become as instinctive and indestructible as family

ties. When the two friends first met, the name of one was Ely de Sallach, the other, Louise Rodier of the old family of Catholic bankers, now extinct, the Rodier-Vimal. Certainly from their birthplaces, one the Château de Sallach in the heart of the Styrian Alps, the other the Hôtel Rodier in the Rue du Faubourg St. Honoré, it would seem that their paths of life must forever separate. A similar misfortune brought them together. They lost their mothers at the same time, and almost at once their fathers both married again. Each of the young girls, during the months that followed these second marriages, had had trouble with her step-mother; and each had finally been exiled to the Convent du Sacré-Cœur at Paris. The banker had chosen this establishment because he managed the funds and knew the superioress. General Sallach had been urged to this choice by his wife, who thus got rid of her step-daughter and gained a pretext for coming often to Paris. Entering the same day the old convent in the Rue de Varenne, the two orphans felt an attraction toward each other which their mutual confidences soon deepened into passionate friendship; and this friendship had lasted because it was based upon the profoundest depths of their characters and was strengthened by time.

The classic tragedy was not so far from nature as hostile critics pretend, when it placed beside its protagonists those personages whose single duty was to

receive their confidences. There are in the reality of daily life souls that seem to be but echoes, ever ready to listen to the sighs and moans of others — soul-mirrors whose entire life is in the reflection they receive, whose personality is but the image projected upon them. On her entrance into the convent Louise Brion had become one of this race, whose adorable modesty Shakespeare has embodied in Horatio, the heroic and loyal second in Hamlet's duel with the assassin of his father. At sixteen as at thirty, it was only necessary to look at her to divine the instinctive self-effacement of a timidly sensitive character, incapable of asserting itself, or of living its own life. Her face was a delicate one, but its fineness passed unnoticed, so great was the reserve in her modest features, in her eyes of ashen gray, the simple folds of her brown hair. She spoke but little, and in a voice without accent; she had the genius for simplicity in dress, the style of dress that in the *argot* of women has the pretty epithet "*tranquille.*" Whether man or woman, these beings, so weak and delicate, with their fine shades of sentiment, unfitted for active life, their desires instinctively attenuated, usually attach themselves, in a seeming contradiction which is at bottom logical, to some ardent and impetuous character, whose audacity fascinates them. They feel an irresistible desire to participate, through sympathy and imagination, in the joy and pain which

they have not the force to encounter in their own experience. That was the secret of the relations between Madame Brion and the Baroness de Carlsberg. From the first week of their girlish intimacy, the passionate and fantastic Ely had bewitched the reasonable and quiet Louise, and this witchery had continued through the years, gaining from the fact that after their departure from the convent the two friends had once more experienced an analogous misfortune. They had both been in their marriage victims of paternal ambition. Louise Rodier had become Madame Brion, because old Rodier, having fallen into secret difficulties, thought that he could save himself by accepting Horace Brion as a son-in-law and partner. The latter, after his father had been ruined in the Bourse, had, in fifteen energetic years, not only made a fortune, but won a kind of financial fame by re-establishing affairs supposed to be hopeless, such as the Austro-Dalmatian Railway, so feloniously launched and abandoned by the notorious Justus Hafner (vide "Cosmopolis"). To efface the memory of his father Brion needed to ally himself with one of those families of finance whose professional honor is an equivalent of a noble title. The chief of the house of Rodier-Vimal needed an aide-de-camp of distinguished superiority in the secret crisis of his affairs. Louise, knowing the necessity of this union, had accepted it, and had been horribly unhappy.

It was the same year that Ely de Sallach, constrained by her father, married the Archduke Henry Francis, who had fallen in love with her at Carlsbad, with one of those furious passions that may overtake a *blasé* prince of forty-five, for whom the experience of feeling is so violent and unexpected that he clings to it with all the fever of youth momentarily recaptured. The Emperor, though very hostile on principle to morganatic marriages, had consented to this one in the hope that the most revolutionary and disquieting of his cousins would quiet down and begin a new life. General Sallach had looked to the elevation of his daughter for a field-marshalship. He and his wife had so persuaded the girl, that she, tempted herself by a vanity too natural at her age, had yielded.

Twelve years had passed since then, and the two old friends of Sacré-Cœur were still just as orphaned and as solitary and unhappy, one in the glittering rôle of a demi-princess, the other, queen of the great bank, as on the day when they first met under the trees of the garden by the Boulevard des Invalides. They had never ceased to write to each other; and each having seen the image of her own sorrow in the destiny of the other, their affection had been deepened by their mutual misery, by all their confidences, and by their silence, too.

The hardness of the financier, his ferocious egoism, disguised beneath the studied manners of a sham man

of the world, his brutal sensuality, had made it possible for Louise to understand the miseries of poor Ely, abandoned to the jealous despotism of a cruel and capricious master, in whom the intellectual nihilism of an anarchist was associated with the imperious pride of a tyrant; while the Baroness was able to sympathize, through the depth of her own misery, with the wounds that bled in the tender heart of her friend. But she, daughter of a soldier, the descendant of those heroes of Tchernagora, who had never surrendered, was not submissive, like the heiress of the good Rodier and Vimal families. She had immediately opposed her own pride and will to those of her husband. The atrocious scenes she had passed through without quailing would have ended in open rupture if the young woman had not thought of appealing to a very high authority. A sovereign influence commanded a compromise, thanks to which the Baroness recovered her independence without divorce or legal separation, with what rage on the part of her husband may be imagined.

In fact, in four years this was the first winter she had spent with the Archduke, who, being ill, had retired to his villa at Cannes — a strange place, truly, made in the image of its strange master; half of the house was a palace, and half a laboratory.

Madame Brion had witnessed from afar this conjugal drama, whose example she had not followed. The gentle creature, without a word, had let herself

be wounded and broken by the hard fist of the brute whose name she bore. This contrast itself had made her friend dearer to her. Ely de Carlsberg had served her as her own rebellion, her own independence, her own romance — a romance in which she was ignorant of many chapters. For the confidences of two friends who see each other only at long intervals are always somewhat uncandid. Instinctively a woman who confesses to a friend guards against troubling the image which the friend forms of her; and that image gradually acquires a more striking resemblance to her past than to her present.

So the Baroness had concealed from her confidante all of one side of her life. Beautiful as she was, rich, free, audacious, and unburdened with principles, she had sought vengeance and oblivion of her domestic miseries where all women who have her temperament and her lack of religious faith seek a like oblivion and a like vengeance. She had had adventures — many adventures — Madame Brion had no suspicion of them. She loved the life in Ely, not realizing that this movement, this vitality, this energy, could not exist in a creature of her race and her freedom without leading to culpable experiences. But is it not the first quality, even the very definition, of friendship, this inconsistent favoritism which causes us to forget with certain persons the well-known law of the simultaneous development of merits and faults,

and the necessary bond that connects these contrary manifestations of the same individuality?

Yet, however blinded by friendship a woman may be, and however honest and uninitiated in the gallant intrigues that go on around her, she is none the less a woman, and as such apparently possesses a special instinct for sexual matters, which enables her to feel how her confidential friend conducts herself toward men. Louise could not have formulated the change in Ely, and yet for years, at every interview, she had perceived the change. Was it a greater freedom in manner and dress, a shade of boldness in her glance, a readiness to put an evil interpretation on every intimacy she noticed, an habitual disenchantment, almost a cynicism, in her conversation?

The signs that reveal the woman who has dared to overstep conventional prejudices, as well as moral principles, Madame Brion could not help remarking in Madame de Carlsberg; but she did not permit herself to analyze them, or even think about them. Delicate souls, who are created for love, feel a self-reproach, almost a remorse, at the discovery of a fault in one they love. They blame themselves and their impressions, rather than judge the person from whom the impressions were received. An uneasiness remains, however, which the first precise fact renders insupportable.

To Louise Brion this little fact had appeared in

the recent attitude of her friend toward Pierre Hautefeuille. She chanced to be at Cannes when the young man was presented to the Baroness at the Chésy residence. On that evening she had been surprised at Ely, who had had a long talk with the young stranger *en tête-à-tête* in a corner of the drawing-room. Having left at once for Monte Carlo, she doubtless would not have thought of it again, if, on another visit to Cannes, she had not found the young man on a footing of very sudden intimacy at the Villa Carlsberg. Staying herself a few days at the villa, she was forced to recognize that her friend was either a great coquette or was very imprudent with Hautefeuille. She had chosen the hypothesis of imprudence. She told herself that this boy was falling wildly in love with Ely, and she was capable, out of mere carelessness or *ennui*, of accepting a diversion of that kind. Louise resolved to warn her, but did not dare, overcome by that inner paralysis which the strong produce in the weak by the simple magnetism of their presence.

The little scene which she had observed this evening in the Casino had given her the courage to speak. The action of Pierre Hautefeuille, his haste to procure the jewel sold by Madame de Carlsberg, had singularly moved this faithful friend. She had suddenly perceived the analogy between her own feelings and those of the lover.

Having herself mingled with the crowd of specta-

tors to follow the play of her friend, whose nervousness had all day disquieted her, she had seen her sell the gold case. This Bohemian act had pained her cruelly, and still more the thought that this jewel which Ely used continually would be bought in a second-hand shop of Monte Carlo and given by some lucky gambler to some *demi-mondaine.* She had immediately started toward the usurer, with the same purpose as Pierre Hautefeuille; and to discover that he had been moved by the same idea touched a deep chord of sympathy in her. She had been moved in her affection for Madame de Carlsberg, and in a secret spot of her gentle and romantic nature, so little used to find in men an echo of her own delicacy.

"Unfortunate man," she murmured. "What I feared has come. He loves her. Is there still time to warn Ely, and keep her from having on her conscience the unhappiness of this boy?"

It was this thought that determined the innocent, good creature to speak to her friend as soon as she had an opportunity; and the opportunity presented itself at this moment.

They had come out of the Casino at about eleven o'clock, escorted by Brion, who had left them at the villa, and, when they were alone, the Baroness had asked her friend to walk a while in the garden to enjoy the night, which was really divine. Enveloped in their furs, they began to pace the terrace and the

silent alleys, captivated by the contrast between the feverish atmosphere in which they had spent the evening and the peaceful immensity of the scene that now surrounded them. And the contrast was no less surprising between the Baroness Ely at roulette and the Baroness Ely walking at this hour.

The moon, shining full in the vast sky, seemed to envelop her with light, to cast upon her a charm of languorous exaltation. Her lips were half open, as though drinking in the purity of the cold, beautiful night, and the pale rays seemed to reach her heart through her eyes, so intently did she gaze at the silver disk which illumined the whole horizon with almost the intensity of noon. The sea above all was luminous, a sea of velvet blue, over which a white fire, quivering and dying, traced its miraculous way. The atmosphere was so pure that in the bright bay one could distinguish the rigging of two yachts, motionless, at anchor by the Cape, upon whose heights stood the crenellated walls of the old Grimaldi palace. The huge, dark mass of Cape Martin stretched out on the other side; and everywhere was the contrast of transparent brilliancy and sharp, black forms, stamped on the dream-like sky. The long branches of the palms, the curved poignards of the aloes, the thick foliage of the orange trees hung in deep shadow over the grass where the fairy moonlight played in all its splendor.

One by one the lights went out in the houses, and

from the terrace the two women could see them, white amid the dark olives sleeping in the universal sleep that had fallen everywhere. The quiet of the hour was so perfect that no sound could be heard but the crackling of the gravel under their small shoes, and the rustle of their dresses. Madame de Carlsberg was the first to break the silence, yielding to the pleasure of thinking aloud, so delicious at such a time and with such a friend. She had paused a moment to gaze more intently at the sky:—

"How pure the night is, and how soft. When I was a child at Sallach, I had a German governess who knew the names of all the stars. She taught me to recognize them. I can find them still: there is the Pole Star and Cassiopeia and the Great Bear and Arcturus and Vega. They are always in the same place. They were there before we were born, and will be after we are dead. Do you ever think of it—that the night looked just the same to Marie Antoinette, Mary Stuart, Cleopatra, all the women who, across the years and the centuries, represent immense disasters, tragic sorrows, and splendid fame? Do you ever think that they have watched this same moon and these stars in the same part of the heavens, and with the same eyes as ours, with the same delight and sadness; and that they have passed away as we shall beneath these motionless stars, eternally indifferent to our joy and misery? When these thoughts

come to me, when I think of what poor creatures we are, with all our agonies that cannot move an atom of this immensity, I ask myself what matter our laws, our customs, our prejudices, our vanity in supposing that we are of any importance in this magnificent eternal and impassive universe. I say to myself that there is but one thing of value here below: to satisfy the heart, to feel, to drain every emotion to the bottom, to go to the end of all our desires, in short, to live one's own life, one's real life, free of all lies and conventions, before we sink into the inevitable annihilation."

There was something frightful in hearing these nihilistic words on the lips of this beautiful young woman, and on such a night, in such a scene. To the tender and religious Madame Brion these words were all the more painful since they were spoken with the same voice that had directed the *croupier* where to place the final stake. She greatly admired Ely for that high intelligence which enabled her to read all books, to write in four or five languages, to converse with the most distinguished men and on every subject.

Trained until her seventeenth year in the solid German manner, the Baroness Ely had found, at first in the society of the Archduke, then in her life in Italy, an opportunity for an exceptional culture from which her supple mind of a demi-Slave had profited.

Alas! of what use was that learning, that facile comprehension, that power of expression, since she

had not learned to govern her caprices — as could be seen in the attitude at the roulette table — nor to govern her thoughts — which was too well shown by the sombre creed that she had just confessed? That inner want, among so many gifts and accomplishments, once more oppressed the faithful friend, who had never brought herself to admit the existence of certain ideas in her companion of Sacré-Cœur. And she said: —

"You speak again as though you did not believe in another life. Is it possible that you are sincere?"

"No, I do not believe in it," the Baroness replied, with a shake of her pretty head, a breath of air lifting the long, silky fur of her sable cape. "That was the one good influence my husband had over me; but he had that. He cured me of that feeble-heartedness that dares not look the truth in the face. The truth is that man has never discovered a trace of a Providence, of a pity or justice from on high, the sign of anything above us but blind and implacable force. There is no God. There is nothing but this world. That is what I know now, and I am glad to know it. I like to oppress myself with the thought of the ferocity and stupidity of the universe. I find in it a sort of savage pleasure, an inner strength."

"Do not talk like that," interrupted Madame Brion, clasping her arms around her friend as though she were a suffering sister or a child. "You make me feel too sad. But," she continued, pressing the hand

of the Baroness while they resumed their walk, "I know you have a weight on your heart of which you do not tell me. You have never been happy. You are less so than ever to-day, and you blame God for your hard fate. You relieve yourself in blasphemy as you did to-night in play, wildly, desperately, as they say some men drink; don't deny it. I was there all the evening, hidden in the crowd, while you were playing. Pardon me. You had been so nervous all day. You had worried me. And I did not want to leave you five minutes alone. And, my Ely, I saw you sitting among those women and those men, playing so unreasonably in the sight of all that crowd whispering your name. I saw you sell the case you used so much. Ah, my Ely, my Ely!"

A heavy sigh accompanied this loved name, repeated with passionate tenderness. That innocent affection which suffered from the faults of its idol without daring to formulate a reproach, touched the Baroness, and made her a little ashamed. She disguised her feelings in a laugh, which she attempted to make gay, in order to quiet her friend's emotion.

"How fortunate that I didn't see you! I should have borrowed money from you and lost it. But do not worry; it will not happen again. I had heard so often of the gambling fever that I wished just once, not to trifle as I usually do, but really play. It is even more annoying than it was stupid. I regret

nothing but the cigarette case." She hesitated a moment. "It was the souvenir of a person who is no longer in this world. But I shall find the merchant to-morrow."

"That is useless," said Madame Brion, quickly. "He no longer has it."

"You have already bought it? How I recognize my dear friend in that!"

"I thought of doing it," Louise answered in a low voice, "but some one else was before me."

"Some one else?" said Madame de Carlsberg, with a sudden look of haughtiness. "Whom you saw and whom I know?" she asked.

"Whom I saw and whom you know," answered Madame Brion. "But I dare not tell the name, now that I see how you take it.—And yet, it is not one whom you have the right to blame, for if he has fallen in love with you, it is indeed your fault. You have been so imprudent with him—let me say it, so coquettish!"

Then, after a silence: "It was young Pierre Hautefeuille."

The excellent woman felt her heart beat as she pronounced these last words. She was anxious to prevent Madame de Carlsberg from continuing a flirtation which she thought dangerous and culpable; but the anger which she had seen come into her friend's face made her fear that she had gone too far, and would

draw down upon the head of the imprudent lover one of Ely's fits of rage, and she reproached herself as for an indelicacy, almost a treachery toward the poor boy whose tender secret she had surprised.

But it was not anger that, at the mention of this name, had changed the expression of Madame de Carlsberg and flushed her cheeks with a sudden red. Her friend, who knew her so well, could see that she was overcome with emotion, but very different from her injured pride of a moment before. She was so astonished that she stopped speaking. The Baroness made no answer, and the two women walked on in silence. They had entered an alley of palm trees, flecked with moonlight, but still obscure. And as Madame Brion could no longer see the face of her friend, her own emotions became so strong that she hazarded, tremblingly:—

"Why do you not answer me? Is it because you think I should have prevented the young man from doing what he did? But for your sake I pretended not to have seen it. Are you wounded at my speaking of your coquetry? You know I would not have spoken in that way, if I did not so esteem your heart."

"You wound me?" said the Baroness. "You? You know that that is impossible. No, I am not wounded. I am touched. I did not know he was there," she added in a lower tone, "that he saw me at that table, acting as I did. You think that I have flirted with him? Wait, look."

And as they had reached the end of the alley, she turned. Tears were slowly running down her cheeks. Through her eyes, from whence these tears had fallen, Louise could read to the bottom of her soul, and the evidence which before she had not dared to believe now forced itself upon her.

"Oh! you are weeping." And, as though overcome by the moral tragedy which she now perceived, "You love him!" she cried, "you love him!"

"What use to hide it now?" Ely answered. "Yes, I love him! When you told me what he did this evening, which proves, as I know, that he loves me, too, it touched me in a painful spot. That is all. I should be happy, should I not? And you see I am all upset. If you but knew the circumstances in which this sentiment overtook me, my poor friend, you would indeed pity your Ely. Ah!" she repeated, "pity her, pity her!"

And, resting her head on her friend's shoulder, she began to weep, to weep like a child, while the other, bewildered at this sudden and unexpected outburst, replied — revealing even in her pity the naïveté of an honest woman, incapable of suspicion: —

"I beg you calm yourself. It is true it is a terrible misfortune for a woman to love when she has no right to satisfy it. But, do not feel remorseful, and, above all, do not think I blame you. When I spoke as I did it was to put you on your guard against a

wrong that you might do. Ah! I see too well that you have not been a coquette. I know you have not allowed the young man to divine your feelings, and I know, too, that he will never divine them, and that you will be always my blameless Ely. Calm yourself, smile for me. Is it not good to have a friend, a real friend, who can understand you?"

"Understand me? Poor Louise! You love me, yes, you love me well. But you do not know me."

Then, in a kind of transport, she took her friend's arm, and, looking her in the face, "Listen!" she said, "you believe me still to be, as I was once, your blameless Ely. Well, it is not true. I have had a lover. Hush, do not answer. It must be said. It is said. And that lover is the most intimate friend of Pierre Hautefeuille, a friend to him as you are to me, a brother in friendship as you are my sister. That is the weight that you have divined here," and she laid her hand upon her breast. "It is horrible to bear."

Certain confessions are so irremediable that their frankness gives to those who voluntarily make them something of grandeur and nobility even in their fall; and when the confession is made by some one whom we love, as Louise loved Ely, it fills us with a delirium of tenderness for the being who proves her nobility by her confession while the misery of her shame rends her heart. If a few hours before, in some house at Monte Carlo, the slightest word had

been said against the honor of Madame de Carlsberg, what indignation would Madame Brion have not felt, and what pain! Pain she indeed had, agonizing pain, as Ely pronounced these unforgetable words; but of indignation there was not a trace in the heart which replied with these words, whose very reproach was a proof of tenderness, blind and indulgent to complicity:—

"Just God! How you must have suffered! But why did you not tell me before? Why did you not confide in me? Did you think that I would love you less? See, I have the courage to hear all."

And she added, in that thirst for the whole truth which we have for the faults of those who are dear to us, as though we looked to find a pardonable excuse in the cruel details:—

"I beg you, tell me all, all. And first, this man? Do I know him?"

"No," replied Madame de Carlsberg, "his name is Olivier du Prat. I met him at Rome two years ago when I was spending the winter there. That was the period of my life when I saw you least, and wrote to you least frequently. It was also the time when I was the most wicked, owing to solitude, inaction, unhappiness, and my disgust with everything, especially with myself. This man was the secretary of one of the two French embassies. He was much lionized because of the passion he had inspired in two Roman ladies, who almost openly disputed his

favors. It is very ignoble, what I am going to tell you, but such was the truth. It amused me to win him from them both. In that kind of an adventure, just as in play, one expects to find the emotions that others have found in it, and then the result is the same as in roulette. One is bored with it, and one throws one's self into the game from wilfulness and vanity, in the excitement of an absurd struggle. I know now," and her voice became graver, "that I never loved Olivier, but that I so persisted in this *liaison* that he would have the right to say that I wished him to love me, that I wished to be his mistress, and that I did all I could to retain him. He was a singular character, very different from those professional lovers, who are for the most part frightfully vulgar. He was so changeable, so protean, so full of contrasts, so intangible, that to this day I cannot tell whether he loved me or not. You hear me in a dream, and I am speaking as in a dream. I feel that there was something inexplicable in our relations, something unintelligible to a third person. I have never met a being so disconcerting, so irritating, from the endless uncertainty he kept you in, no matter what you did. One day he would be emotional, tremulous, passionate even to frenzy, and on the morrow, sometimes the same day, he would recoil within himself from confidence to suspicion, from tenderness to persiflage, from abandonment to irony, from love to cruelty,

without it being possible either to doubt his sincerity or to discover the cause of this incredible alteration. He had these humors not only in his emotions, but even in his ideas. I have seen him moved to tears by a visit to the Catacombs, and on returning as outrageously atheistical as the Archduke. In society I have seen him hold twenty people enraptured by the charm of his brilliant fancy, and then pass weeks without speaking two words. In short, he was from head to foot a living enigma, which I penetrate better at a distance. He had been early left an orphan. His childhood had been unhappy, and his youth precociously disenchanted. He had been wounded and corrupted too soon. Thence came that insatiability of soul, that elusiveness of character which appeared as soon as I became interested in him in a kind of spasmodic force. When I was young at Sallach I loved to mount difficult horses and try to master them. I cannot better describe my relations with Olivier than by comparing them to a duel between a rider and his horse, when each tries to get the better of the other. I repeat it, I am sure I did not love him. I am not certain that I did not hate him."

She spoke with a dryness that showed how deeply these memories were implanted. She paused a moment, and, plucking a rose from a bush near her, she began to bite the petals nervously, while Madame Brion sighed:—

"Need I pity you for that also,—for having sought happiness out of marriage, and for having met this man, this hard and capricious monster of egoism?"

"I do not judge of him," Madame de Carlsberg answered. "If I had been different myself, I should doubtless have changed him. But he had touched me in an irritable spot; I wished to control him, to master him, and I used a terrible weapon. I made him jealous. All that is a bitter story, and I spare you the details. It would be painful to recall it, and it does not matter. You will know enough when I say that after a day of intimacy, when he had been more tender than ever before, Olivier left Rome suddenly, without an explanation, without a word of adieu, without even writing a letter. I have never seen him again. I have never heard of him, except in a chance conversation this winter, when I learned that he was married. Now you will understand the strange emotions I felt when two months ago Chésy asked permission to present a son of a friend of his mother, who had come to Cannes to recover from a bad cold, a young man, rather solitary and very charming; his name was Pierre Hautefeuille. In the countless conversations that Olivier and I had together in the intervals of our quarrelling, this name had often been spoken. Here again I must explain to you a very peculiar thing,—the nature of this man's conversation and the extraordinary attraction it had for me. This self-

absorbed and enigmatic being had sudden hours of absolute expansion which I have seen in no one else. It was as though he relived his life aloud for me, and I listened with an unparalleled curiosity. He used at these times a kind of implacable lucidity which almost made you cry out, like a surgical operation, and which at the same time hypnotized you with a potent fascination. It was a brutal yet delicate disrobing of his childhood and his youth, with characterizations of such vividness that certain individuals were presented to me as distinctly as though I had really met them. And he himself? Ah, what a strange soul, incomplete and yet superior, so noble and so degraded, so sensitive and so arid, in whom there seemed to be nothing but lassitude, failure, stain, and disillusionment — excepting one sentiment. This man who despised his family, who never spoke of his country without bitterness, who attributed the worst motive to every action, even his own, who denied the existence of God, of virtue, of love, this moral nihilist, in short, in so many ways like the Archduke, had one faith, one cult, one religion. He believed in friendship, that of man for man, denying that one woman could be the friend of another. He did not know you, dear friend. He pretended — I recall his very words — that between two men who had proved each other, who had lived, and thought, and suffered together, and who esteemed each other while

loving each other, there arises a kind of affection so high, so profound, and so strong that nothing can be compared with it. He said that this sentiment was the only one he respected, the only one that time and change could not prevail against. He acknowledged that this friendship was rare; yet he declared that he had met with it several times, and that he himself had experienced one in his life. It was then that he evoked the image of Pierre Hautefeuille. His accent, his look, his whole expression changed while he lingered over the memory of his absent friend. He, the man of all the ironies, recounted with tenderness and respect the naïve details of their first meeting at school, their growing attachment, their boyish vacations. He related with enthusiasm their enlisting together in 1870, and the war, their adventures, their captivity in Germany. He was never tired of praising his friend's purity of soul, his delicacy, his nobility. I have already said that this man was an enigma to me. Such he was above all in his retrospective confidences, to which I listened with astonishment, almost stupor, to behold this anomaly in a heart so lamentably withered, in a land so sterile this flower of delicate sentiment, so young and rare that it made me think — and in spite of Olivier's paradox, it is the highest praise I could give — of our own friendship."

"Thanks," said Madame Brion, "you make me happy. As I listened to you a moment ago I seemed

to hear another person speaking whom I did not recognize. But now I have found you again, so loving, gentle, and good."

"No, not good," Madame de Carlsberg replied. "The proof is that no sooner had Chésy pronounced the name of Pierre Hautefeuille than I was possessed by an idea which you will think abominable. I shall pay for it, perhaps, dearly enough. Olivier's departure and then his marriage had stirred in me that hate of which I spoke. I could not bear to think that this man had left me as he did, and was now happy, contented, indifferent — that he had regained his serenity without my being revenged. One acquires these base passions by living as I have so long, unhappy and desperate, surrounded by pleasure and luxury. Too much moral distress is depraving. When I knew that I was to meet the intimate friend of Olivier, a possible vengeance offered itself to me, a refined, atrocious, and certain vengeance. My life was forever separated from that of Du Prat. He had probably forgotten me. I was sure that if I won the affections of his friend, and he knew of it, it would strike the deepest and most sensitive place in his heart; and that is why I permitted Chésy to present Hautefeuille, and why I indulged in those coquetries for which you blamed me. For it is true that I began thus. *Dieu!* how recent it was, and how long ago it seems!"

"But," interrupted Madame Brion, "does Pierre Hautefeuille know of your relations with Olivier?"

"Ah! you touch me in the sorest spot. He is ignorant of them, as he is of all the base realities of life. It is by his innocence, his simplicity of heart, of which his friend so often spoke — his youth, in short — that this boy, against whom I began so cruel a plot, has won me completely. Never has a doubt or a suspicion entered that heart, so young and so innocent of evil, for which evil does not even exist. I had not spoken with him three times before I understood all that Olivier had said in our conversations at Rome, which left me incredulous and irritated. That respect, that veneration almost, which he professed for this candor and goodness, I felt also in my turn. All the expressions he had used in speaking of his friend came back to me, and at every new encounter I perceived how just they were, how fine, and how true. In my surprise I relinquished my plan of vengeance at the contact of this nature so young and delicate, whose perfume I inhaled as I do that of this flower."

And she lifted to her face the rose with its half-nibbled petals.

"If you only knew how the life I lead wearies and oppresses me! How tired I am of hearing about nothing but the breakfasts that Dickie Marsh gives on his yacht to the grand dukes, of Navagero's bezique with the Prince of Wales, of Chésy's speculations at

the Bourse, and the half-dozen titled fools that follow his advice! If you only knew how even the best of this artificial society tires me! What does it matter to me whether Andryana Bonnacorsi decides to marry the Sire de Corancez, or any of the countless subjects of gossip at the five o'clock teas in Cannes? And I need not speak of the inferno my house has become since my husband suspects me of favoring the marriage of Flossie Marsh with his assistant. To meet in this artificial atmosphere, made up of *ennui* and vanity, folly and stupidity, a being who is at the same time profound and simple, genuine and romantic, in fact archaic, as I like to call him, was a delight. And then the moment came when I realized that I loved this young man and that he loved me. I learned it through no incident, no scene, no word — just by a look from him which I accidentally caught. That is why I have taken refuge here for the last eight days, I was afraid. I am still afraid — afraid for myself a little. I know myself too well, and I know that once started on that road of passion I would go to the end, I would stake my whole life upon it, and if I lost, if — "

She did not finish, but her friend understood her terrible forebodings as she continued: "And I am afraid for him, too, ah, much afraid! He is so young, so inexperienced! He believes so implicitly in me. I cannot better show you how I have changed than by

saying this: six weeks ago, when Hautefeuille was presented to me, I had but one desire, — that Olivier should learn of my acquaintance with his friend. To-day, if I could prevent these two men from ever meeting, or from ever speaking of me to each other, I would give ten years of my life. Now do you understand why the tears came to my eyes when you told me what he did this evening, and how, without speaking to me, he had seen the way I spend my time away from him? I am ashamed, terribly ashamed. Think what it would be if he knew the rest!"

"And what are you going to do?" Madame Brion mournfully exclaimed. "These men will meet again. They will talk about you. And if Olivier loves his friend as you say he does, he will tell him all. Listen," she continued, clasping her hands, "listen to what the tenderest and most devoted affection advises you to do. I do not speak of your duty, of the opinion of the world, or the vengeance of your husband. I know you would brave all that, as you did before, to win your happiness. But you will not win it. You could not be happy in this love with that secret on your heart. You will be tortured by it, and if you speak — I know you, you must have thought of it — if you speak — "

"If I told him, I would never see him again," said Madame de Carlsberg. "Ah! without that certitude — "

"Well! Have the courage to do it," interrupted the other. "You had the strength to leave Cannes for a week. You should have enough to leave for good. You will not be alone. I will go with you. You will suffer. But what is that, when you think of what otherwise would happen, — that you would be everything to this young man, and he everything to you, and he would know that you had been the mistress of his friend!"

"Yes, I have thought of all that," replied the Baroness, "and then I remember I might have had six months, a year, and perhaps more. And that is to have lived, to have been in this hard world for a year one's self, one's true self, the being that one is in one's innermost and deepest reality."

And as she spoke she gazed at the sky with the same look that she had had at the beginning of the walk. She seemed once more to bathe her face in the moonlight, and to absorb the impassive serenity of the mountains and the stars, as though to gather force to go to the end of her desire. And as they resumed again in silence their promenade among the obscure palms, by the fragrant rose-beds, and beneath the sombre shadow of the orange trees, the faithful friend murmured: —

"I will save her in spite of herself."

CHAPTER III

A SCRUPLE

The "Sire" de Corancez — as Madame de Carlsberg disdainfully called the Southerner — was not a man to neglect the slightest detail that he thought advantageous to a well-studied plan. His father, the vine-grower, used to say to him, "Marius? Don't worry about Marius. He's a shrewd bird." And, in truth, at the very moment when the Baroness Ely was beginning her melancholy confidences in the deserted garden alleys of the Villa Brion, this adroit person discovered Hautefeuille at the station, installed him in the train between Chésy and Dickie Marsh and manœuvred so skilfully that before reaching Nice the American had invited Pierre to visit the next morning his yacht, the *Jenny*, anchored in the roadstead at Cannes. But the next morning would be the last hours that Corancez could spend at Cannes before his departure, ostensibly for Marseilles and Barbentane, in reality for Italy.

He had the promise of Florence Marsh that Hautefeuille's visit to the *Jenny* would be immediately followed by an invitation to take part in the cruise of

the 14th. Would Pierre accept? Above all, would he consent to act as witness in that clandestine ceremony, at which the queerly named Venetian *abbé,* Don Fortunato Logumina, would pronounce the words of eternal union between the millions of the deceased Francesco Bonnacorsi and the heir of the doubtful scutcheon of the Corancez? The Provençal had but this last morning to persuade his friend.

But he had no fear of failure, and at half-past nine, fresh, in spite of the fact that he had returned from Monte Carlo on the last train the night before, he briskly descended the steps of the hill that separates Cannes from the Gulf of Juan. Pierre Hautefeuille had installed himself for the winter in one of those hotels whose innumerable flower-framed windows line this height, which the people of Cannes have adorned with the exotic name of California.

It was one of those mornings of sun and wind — of fresh sunlight and warm breeze — which are the charm of winter on this coast. Roses bloomed by hundreds on hedge and terrace. The villas, white or painted, shone through their curtains of palm trees and araucarias, aloes and bamboos, mimosas and eucalyptus. The peninsula of La Croisette projected from the hill toward the islands, and its dark forest of pines, flecked with white houses, arose in strong relief between the tender blue of the sky and the sombre blue of the sea, and the Sire de Corancez went on gayly, a bouquet of

violets in the buttonhole of the most becoming coat that a complacent tailor ever fashioned for a handsome young man in chase of an heiress, his small feet tightly fitted in russet shoes, a straw hat on his thick, black hair; his eyes bright, his teeth glistening in a half smile, his beard lustrous and scented, his movements graceful.

He was happy in the animal portion of his nature; a happiness that was wholly physical and sensual. He was able to enjoy the divine sunlight, the salt breeze, odorous with flowers; this atmosphere, soft as spring; to enjoy the morning and his own sense of youth, while the calculator within him soliloquized upon the character of the man he was about to rejoin and upon the chances of success:—

"Will he accept or not? Yes, he will beyond any doubt, when he knows that Madame de Carlsberg will be on the boat. Should I tell him? No; I would offend him. How his arm trembled in mine last night when I mentioned her name! Bah! Marsh or his niece will speak to him about her, or they are no Americans. That is their way—and it succeeds with them—to speak right out whatever they think or wish.—If he accepts? Is it prudent to have one more witness? Yes; the more people there are in the secret, the more Navagero will be helpless when the day comes for the great explanation.—A secret? With three women knowing it? Madame de Carlsberg will tell it all to

Madame Brion. It will go no further on that side. Flossie Marsh will tell it all to young Verdier. And it will stop there, too. Hautefeuille? Hautefeuille is the most reliable of all. — How little some men change! There is a boy I have scarcely seen since our school-days. He is just as simple and innocent as when we used to confess our sins to the good Father Jaconet. He has learned nothing from life. He does not even suspect that the Baroness is as much in love with him as he with her. She will have to make a declaration to him. If we could talk it over together, she and I. Let nature have her way. A woman who desires a young man and does not capture him — that may occur, perhaps, in the horrible fogs of the North, but in this sunlight and among these flowers, never. — Good, here is his hotel. It would be convenient for a rendezvous, these barracks. So many people going in and out that a woman might enter ten times without being noticed."

Hôtel des Palmes — the name justified by a tropical garden — appeared in dazzling letters on the façade of this building, whose gray walls, pretentiously decorated with gigantic sculpture, arose at a bend of the road. The balconies were supported by colossal caryatides, the terrace by fluted columns. Pierre Hautefeuille occupied a modest room in this caravansary, which had been recommended by his doctor; and if, on the night before, his sentimental reverie in the

hall at Monte Carlo had seemed paradoxical, his daily presence in a cell of this immense cosmopolitan hive was no less so.

Here he lived, retired, absorbed in his chimerical fancies, enveloped in the atmosphere of his dreams, while beside him, above him, and below him swarmed the agitated colony which the Carnival attracts to the coast. Again on this morning the indulgent mockery of Corancez might have found a fitting subject, if the heavy stones of the building had suddenly become transparent, and the enterprising Southerner had seen his friend, with his elbows on the writing-table, hypnotized before the gold box purchased the evening before; and his mockery would have changed to veritable stupefaction, had he been able to follow the train of this lover's thoughts, who, ever since his purchase, had been a prey to one of those fevers of remorseful anxiety which are the great tragedies of a timid and silent passion.

This fever had begun in the train on the way back from Monte Carlo amid the party collected by Corancez. One of Chésy's remarks had started it.

"Is it true," Chésy asked of Marius, "that Baroness Ely lost this evening a hundred thousand francs, and that she sold her diamonds to one of the gamblers in order to continue?"

"How history is written!" Corancez responded. "I was there with Hautefeuille. She lost this evening just

what she had gained, that is all; and she sold a trifling jewel worth a hundred louis,—a gold cigarette case."

"The one she always uses?" asked Navagero; then gayly, "I hope the Archduke will not hear this story. Although a democrat, he is severe on the question of good form."

"Who do you suppose would tell him?" Corancez replied.

"The aide-de-camp, *parbleu*," exclaimed Chésy. "He spies into everything she does, and if the jewel is gone, the Archduke will hear of it."

"Bah! She will buy it back to-morrow morning. Monte Carlo is full of these honest speculators. They, in fact, are the only ones who win at the game."

While Hautefeuille was listening to this dialogue, every word of which pierced to his heart, he caught a glance from the Marquise Bonnacorsi—a look of curiosity, full of meaning to the timid lover, for he plainly read in it the knowledge of his secret. The subject of the conversation immediately changed, but the words that had been spoken and the expression in Madame Bonnacorsi's eyes sufficed to fill the young man with a remorse as keen as though the precious box had been taken from the pocket of his evening coat, and shown to all these people.

"Could the Marquise have seen me buy it?" he asked himself, trembling from head to foot. "And if she saw me, what does she think?"

Then, as she entered into conversation with Florence Marsh, and appeared once more to be perfectly indifferent to his existence, "No, I am dreaming," he thought; "it is not possible that she saw me. I was careful to observe the people who were there. I was mistaken. She looked at me in that fixed way of hers which means nothing. I was dreaming. But what the others said was not a dream. This cigarette case she will wish to buy back to-morrow. She will find the merchant. He will tell her that he has sold it. He will describe me. If she recognizes me from his description?"

At this thought he trembled once more. In a sudden hallucination he saw the little parlor of the Villa Helmholtz — the Archduke had thus named his house after the great savant who had been his master. The lover saw the Baroness Ely sitting by the fire in a dress of black lace with bows of myrtle green, the one of her dresses which he most admired. He saw himself entering this parlor in the afternoon; he saw the furniture, the flowers in their vases, the lamps with their tinted shades, all these well-loved surroundings, and a different welcome — a look in which he would perceive, not by a wild hypothesis this time, but with certitude, that Madame de Carlsberg knew *what he had done.* The pain which the mere thought of this caused him brought him back to reality.

"I am dreaming again," he said to himself, "but it

is none the less certain that I have been very imprudent — even worse, indelicate. I had no right to buy that box. No, I had no right. I risked, in the first place, the chance of being seen, and of compromising her. And then, even as it is, if some indiscreet remark is made, and if the Prince makes an investigation?"

In another hallucination he saw the Archduke Henry Francis and the Baroness face to face. He saw the beautiful, the divine eyes of the woman he loved fill with tears. She would suffer in her private life once more, and from his fault, on account of him who would have given all his blood with delight in order that that mouth so wilfully sad might smile with happiness. Thus the most imaginary, but also the most painful of anxieties commenced to torture the young man, while Miss Marsh and Corancez in a corner of the compartment exchanged in a low voice these comments: —

"I shall ask my uncle to invite him, that's settled," said the young American girl. "Poor boy, I have a real sympathy for him. He looks so melancholy. They have pained him by talking so of the Baroness."

"No, no," said Corancez. "He is in despair at having missed, by his own fault, a chance of speaking with his idol this evening. Imagine, at the moment when I went up to her — piff — my Hautefeuille disappeared. He is remorseful at having been too timid. That is a sentiment which I hope never to feel."

Remorse. The astute Southerner did not realize how truly he had spoken. He was mistaken in regard to the motive, but he had given the most precise and fitting term to the emotion which kept Hautefeuille awake through the long hours of the night, and which this morning held him motionless before the precious case. It was as though he had not bought it, but had stolen it, so much did he suffer to have it there before his eyes. What was he to do now? Keep it? That had been his instinctive, his passionate desire when he hurried to the merchant. This simple object would make the Baroness Ely so real, so present to him. Keep it? The words he had heard the night before came back to him, and with them all his apprehension. Send it back to her? What could be more certain to make the young woman seek out who it was who had taken such a liberty, and if she did find out?

A prey to these tumultuous thoughts, Pierre turned the golden box in his hands. He spelled out the absurd inscription written in precious stones on the cover of the case: "M.E. moi. 100 C.C. — Aimez-moi sans cesser," the characters said; and the lover thought that this present, bearing such a tender request, must have been given to Madame de Carlsberg by the Archduke or some very dear friend.

What agony he would have felt had the feminine trinket been able to relate its history and all the quarrels that its sentimental device had caused during the

liaison of the Baroness Ely with Olivier du Prat. How often Du Prat, too, had tried to discover from whom his mistress had received this present — one of those articles whose unnecessary gaudiness savors of adultery. And he could never draw from the young woman the name of the mysterious person who had given it, of whom Ely had said to Madame Brion, "It was some one who is no longer in this world."

In truth, this suspicious case was not a souvenir of anything very culpable; the Baroness had received it from one of the Counts Kornow. She had had with him one of her earliest flirtations, pushed far enough — as the inscription testified — but interrupted before its consummation by the departure of the young Count for the war in Turkey. He had been killed at Plevna.

Yes, how miserable Hautefeuille would have been if he could have divined the words that had been uttered over this case — words of romantic tenderness from the young Russian, words of outrageous suspicion from his dearest friend, that Olivier whose portrait — what irony! — was on the table before him at this moment. That heart so young, still so intact, so pure, so confiding, was destined to bleed for that which he did not suspect on this morning when, in all his delicacy, he accused no one but himself.

Suddenly a knock on the door made him start in terror. He had been so absorbed in his thoughts that he had not noticed the time, or remembered the

rendezvous with his friend. He hid the cigarette case in the table drawer, with all the agitation of a discovered criminal. "Come in," he said in a quivering voice; and the elegant and jovial countenance of Corancez appeared at the door. With that slight accent which neither Paris nor the princely salons of Cannes had been able wholly to correct, the Southerner began: —

"What a country mine is, all the same! What a morning, what air, what sunlight! They are wearing furs up there, and we —" He threw open his light coat. Then, as his eye caught the view, he continued, thinking aloud: "I have never before climbed up to your lighthouse. What a scene! How the long ridge of the Esterel stretches out, and what a sea! A piece of waving satin. This would be divine with a little more space. You are not uncomfortable with only one room?"

"Not in the least," said Hautefeuille; "I have so few things with me — merely a few books."

"That's so," Corancez replied, glancing over the narrow room, which, with the modest case opened on the bureau, had the look of an officer's tent. "You have not the mania for *bric-à-brac*. If you could see the ridiculously complete dressing-case that I carry around with me, not to speak of a trunk full of knick-knacks. But I have been corrupted by the foreigners. You have remained a true Frenchman. People never realize how simple, sober, and economical the French

are. They are too much so in their hate of new inventions. They detest them as much as the English and Americans love them — you, for example. I am sure that it was only by accident you came to this ultra-modern hotel, and that you abominate the luxury and the comfort."

"You call it luxury?" Hautefeuille interrupted, shrugging his shoulders. "But there is truth in what you say. I don't like to complicate my existence."

"I know that prejudice," Corancez replied; "you are for the stairway instead of the lift, for the wood fire instead of the steam heater, for the oil lamp instead of the electric light, for the post instead of the telephone. Those are the ideas of old France. My father had them. But I belong to the new school. Never too many hot and cold water faucets. Never too many telegraph and telephone wires. Never too many machines to save you the slightest movement. They have one fault, however, these new hotels. Their walls are thin as a sheet of paper; and as I have something serious to say to you, and also a great service to ask of you, we will go out, if you are willing. We'll walk to the port, where Marsh will wait for us at half-past ten. Does that suit you? We'll kill time by taking the longest way."

The Provençal had a purpose in proposing the "longest way." He wished to lead his friend past the garden of Madame de Carlsberg.

Corancez was something of a psychologist, and was guided by his instinct with more certainty than he could have been by all the theories of M. Taine on the revival of images. He was certain that the proposition in regard to the plot at Genoa would be accepted by Hautefeuille for the sake of a voyage with the Baroness Ely. The more vividly the image of the young woman was called up to the young man, the more he would be disposed to accept Corancez's proposition.

Thanks to his innocent Machiavelism, the two friends, instead of going straight toward the port, took the road that led to the west of California. They passed a succession of wild ravines, still covered with olives, those beautiful trees whose delicate foliage gives a silver tone to the genuine Provençal landscape. The houses grew more rare and isolated, till at certain places, as in the valley of Urie, one seemed to be a hundred miles from town and shore, so completely did the wooded cliffs hide the sea and the modern city of Cannes.

The misanthropy of the Archduke Henry Francis had led him to build his villa on this very ridge, at whose foot lay that species of park — inevitably inhabited and preserved by the English — through which Corancez conducted Hautefeuille. They came to a point where the Villa Helmholtz suddenly presented itself to their view. It was a heavy construction of two stories, flanked on one side by a vast greenhouse

and on the other by a low building with a great chimney emitting a dense smoke. The Southerner pointed to the black column rising into the blue sky and driven by the gentle breeze through the palms of the garden.

"The Archduke is in his laboratory," he said; "I hope that Verdier is making some beautiful discovery to send to the Institute."

"You don't think, then, that he works himself?" asked Pierre.

"Not much," said Corancez. "You know the science of princes and their literature. However, that doesn't matter to me in the least. But what I don't like at all is the way he treats his charming wife—for she is charming, and she has once more proved it to me in a circumstance that I shall tell you about; and you heard what they said last night, that she is surrounded by spies."

"Even at Monte Carlo?" Hautefeuille exclaimed.

"Above all at Monte Carlo," replied Corancez. "And then, it is my opinion that if the Archduke does not love the Baroness he is none the less jealous, furiously jealous, of her, and nothing is more ferocious than jealousy without love. Othello strangled his wife for a handkerchief he had given her, and he adored her. Think of the row the Archduke would make about the cigarette case she sold if it was he who gave it to her."

These remarks, in a tone half serious, half joking, contained a piece of advice which the Southerner wished to give his friend before departing. It was as though he had said in plain language: "Court this pretty woman as much as you like; she is delicious; but beware of the husband." He saw Hautefeuille's expressive face suddenly grow clouded, and congratulated himself on being understood so quickly. How could he have guessed that he had touched an open wound, and that this revelation of the Prince's jealousy had but intensified the pain of remorse in the lover's tender conscience?

Hautefeuille was too proud, too manly, with all his delicacy, to harbor for a moment such calculations as his friend had diplomatically suggested. He was one of those who, when they love, are afflicted by nothing but the suffering of the loved one, and who are always ready to expose themselves to any danger. That which he had seen the night before in the hallucination of his first remorsefulness he saw again, and more clearly, more bitterly,—that possible scene between the Archduke and the Baroness Ely, of which he would be the cause, if the Prince learned of the sale of the case, and the Baroness was unable to recover it.

So he listened distractedly to Corancez's talk, who, however, had had the tact to change the conversation and to relate one of the humorous anecdotes of his repertory. What interest could Pierre have in the

stories, more or less true, of the absurdities or scandals of the coast? He did not again pay attention to his companion until, having reached La Croisette, Corancez decided to put the great question. Along this promenade, more crowded than usual, a person was approaching who would furnish the Southerner with the best pretext for beginning his confidence; and, suddenly taking the arm of the dreamer to arouse him from his reveries, Corancez whispered:—

"I told you a moment ago that Madame de Carlsberg had of late been particularly good to me, and I told you, as we left the hotel, that I had a service to ask of you, a great service. You do not perceive the connection between these two circumstances? You will soon understand the enigma. Do you see who is coming toward us?"

"I see the Count Navagero," Hautefeuille answered, "with his two dogs and a friend whom I do not know. That is all."

"It is the whole secret of the enigma. But wait till they pass. He is with Lord Herbert Bohun. He will not deign to speak to us."

The Venetian moved toward them, more English in appearance than the Englishman by his side. This child of the Adriatic had succeeded in realizing the type of the Cowes or Scarborough "masher," and with such perfection that he escaped the danger of becoming a caricature. Clothed in a London suit of that cloth

which the Scotch call "harris" from its place of origin, and which has a vague smell of peat about it, his trousers turned up according to the London manner, although not a drop of rain had fallen for a week, he was walking with long, stiff strides, one hand grasping his cane by the middle, the other hand holding his gloves.

His face was smoothly shaven; he wore a cap of the same cloth as that of his coat, and smoked a briarwood pipe of the shape used at Oxford. Two small, hairy Skye terriers trotted behind him, their stubby legs supporting a body three times as long as it was high. From what tennis match was he returning? To what game of golf was he on his way? His red hair, of that color so frequent in the paintings of Bonifazio, an inheritance from the doges, his ancestors, added the finishing touch to his incredible resemblance to Lord Herbert.

There was, however, one difference between them. As they passed Corancez and Hautefeuille, the twins uttered a good morning — Bohun's entirely without accent, while the syllables of the Venetian were emphasized in a manner excessively Britannic.

"You have observed that man," Corancez continued, when they had passed beyond earshot, "and you take him for an Anglomaniac of the most ridiculous kind. But, when you scratch his English exterior, what do you suppose you find beneath it? An Italian of the

time of Machiavelli, as unscrupulous as though he were living at the court of the Borgias. He would poison us all, you, me, any one who crossed his path. I have read it in his hand, but don't be uneasy; he has not yet put his principles into practice, only he has tortured for six years a poor, defenceless woman, the adorable Madame Bonnacorsi, his sister. I do not attempt to explain it. But for six years he has so terrorized over this woman that she has not taken a step without his knowing of it, has not had a servant that he has not chosen, has not received a letter without having to account for it to him. It is one of those domestic tyrannies which you would not believe possible unless you had read of them in the newspaper reports, or actually witnessed it as I have. He does not wish her to remarry, because he lives on her great fortune. That is the point."

"How infamous!" Hautefeuille exclaimed. "But are you sure?"

"As sure as I am that I see Marsh's boat," replied Corancez, pointing to the trim yacht at anchor in the bay. And he continued lightly, in a tone that was sentimental and yet manly, not without a certain grace: "And what I am going to ask you is to help me circumvent this pretty gentleman. We Provençaux have always a Quixotic side to our character. We have a mania for adventurous undertakings; it is the sun that puts that in our blood. If Madame Bonna-

corsi had been happy and free, doubtless I should not have paid much attention to her. But when I learned that she was unhappy, and was being miserably abused, I fell wildly in love with her. How I came to let her know of this and to find that she loved me I will tell you some other day. If Navagero is from Venice, I am from Barbentane. It is a little further from the sea, but we understand navigation. At any rate, I am going to marry Madame Bonnacorsi, and I am going to ask you to be my groomsman."

"You are going to marry Madame Bonnacorsi?" repeated Hautefeuille, too astonished to answer his friend's request. "But the brother?"

"Oh! he knows nothing about it," Corancez replied. "But that is just where the good fairy came into the story in the form of the charming Baroness Ely. Without her, Andryana—permit me thus to call my *fiancée*—would never have brought herself to say 'yes.' She loved me, and yet she was afraid. Do not misjudge her. These tender, sensitive women have strange timidities, which are difficult to understand. She was afraid, but chiefly for me. She feared a quarrel between her brother and me—hot words, a duel. Then I proposed and persuaded her to accept the most romantic and unusual expedient,—a secret marriage. On the 14th of next month, God willing, a Venetian priest, in whom she has confidence, will marry us in the chapel of a palace at Genoa. In the

meantime I shall disappear. I am supposed to be at Barbentane among my vineyards. And on the 13th, while Navagero is playing the Englishman on Lord Herbert Bohun's yacht, with the Prince of Wales and other royal personages, Marsh's boat, to which you will be invited, will sail away with a number of passengers, among whom will be the woman I love the most in the world, and to whom I shall devote my life, and the friend I most esteem, if he does not refuse my request. What does he answer?"

"He answers," said Hautefeuille, "that if ever he was astonished in his life, he is so now. You, Corancez, in love, and so much in love that you will sacrifice your liberty. You have always seemed so careless, so indifferent. And a secret marriage. But it will not remain a secret twenty-four hours. I know your exuberance. You always tell everything you know to everybody. But I thank you for the friendship you have shown me, and I will be your groomsman."

As he said these last words he shook Corancez's hand with that simple seriousness which he showed for everything. His companion had touched him deeply. Doubtless this simplicity and candid trustfulness embarrassed the Southerner. He was very willing to profit from them, but he felt a little ashamed at abusing too much this loyal nature, whose charm he also felt, and he mingled with his thanks a confession such as he had never before made to any one.

"Don't think me so exuberant. The sun always has that effect. But, in truth, we men of the South never say what we mean. — Here we are. Remember," he said, with his finger on his lips, "Miss Marsh knows all, Marsh knows nothing."

"One word more," Hautefeuille replied; "I have promised to be your groomsman. But you will permit me to go to Genoa another way? I don't know these people well enough to accept an invitation of that kind."

"I trust to Flossie Marsh to overcome your scruples," said Corancez, unable to repress a smile. "You will be one of the passengers on the *Jenny*. Do you know why this boat is called the *Jenny?* Only an Anglo-Saxon would permit himself seriously such a play upon words. You have heard of Jenny Lind, the singer? Well, the reason the facetious Marsh gave this pretty name to his floating villa was *because she keeps the high seas*. And every time he explains this he is so amazed at his wit that he fairly chokes with laughter. — But what a delicious day."

The elegant lines of the *Jenny's* rigging and white hull could now be seen close at hand. She seemed the young, coquettish queen of the little port, amid the fishing boats, yawls, and coasters that swarmed about the quay. A group of sailors on the stone curb sang while they mended their nets. On the ground-floor of the houses were offices of ship companies, or

shops, stored with provisions and tackle. The working population, totally absent from this city of leisure, is concentrated upon the narrow margin of the port, and gives it that popular picturesqueness so refreshing in contrast with the uniform banality imprinted on the South by its wealthy visitors. It was doubtless an unconscious sense of that contrast that led the plebeian Marsh to choose this point of the roadstead.

This self-made man who also had labored on the quays at Cleveland, by the shores of Lake Erie, whose waters are more stormy than the Mediterranean, despised at heart the vain and vapid society in which he lived. He lived in it, however, because the cosmopolitan aristocracy was still another world to conquer. When he regaled some grand duke or prince regent on board his yacht, what voluptuous pride he might feel on looking at these fishermen of his own age, and saying to himself, while he smoked his cigar with the royal or imperial highness: "Thirty years ago these fishermen and I were equals. I was working just as they are. And now?" As Hautefeuille and Corancez did not figure on any page of the Almanach de Gotha, the master of the yacht did not consider it necessary to await his visitors on deck; and when the young men arrived they found no one but Miss Flossie Marsh, seated on a camp-stool before an easel, sketching in water colors. Minutely, patiently, she copied the landscape before her, — the far-off group of islands melting

together like a long, dark carapace fixed on the blue bay, the hollow and supple line of the gulf, with the succession of houses among the trees, and, above all, the water of such an intense azure, dotted with white sails, and over all that other azure of the sky, clear, transparent, luminous. The industrious hand of the young girl copied this scene in forms and colors whose exactitude and hardness revealed a very small talent at the service of a very strong will.

"These American women are astonishing," whispered Corancez to Hautefeuille. "Eighteen months ago she had never touched a brush. She began to work and she has made herself an artist, as she will make herself a *savante* if she marries Verdier. They construct talents in their minds as their dentists build gold teeth in your mouth. — She sees us."

"My uncle is busy at present," said the young girl, after giving them a vigorous handshake. "I tell him he should call the boat his office. As soon as we reach a port his telephone is connected with the telegraph station, and the cable begins to communicate with Marionville. Let us say good morning to him, and then I will show you the yacht. It is pretty enough, but an old model; it is at least ten years old. Mr. Marsh is having one built at Glasgow that will beat this one and a good many others. It is to measure four thousand tons. The *Jenny* is only eighteen hundred. But here is my uncle."

Miss Florence had led the young men across the deck of the boat, with its planking as clean, its brass-work as polished, its padded furniture, of brown straw, as fresh, its Oriental rugs as precious as though this flooring, this metal, these armchairs, these carpets belonged to one of the villas on the coast, instead of to this yacht which had been tossed on all the waves of the Atlantic and Pacific. And the room into which the young girl introduced them could not have presented a different aspect had it been situated in Marionville on the fifth story of one of those colossal buildings which line the streets with their vast cliffs of iron and brick. Three secretaries were seated at their desks. One of them was copying letters on a typewriter, another was telephoning a despatch, the third was writing in shorthand at the dictation of the little, thick-set, gray-faced man whom Corancez had shown to Hautefeuille at the table of *trente-et-quarante*. This king of Ohio paused to greet his visitors: —

"Impossible to accompany you, gentlemen," he said. "While you are taking your promenade," he added, with that air of tranquil defiance by which the true Yankee manifests his contempt for the Old World, "we shall prepare a pretty voyage for you. But you Frenchmen are so contented at home that you never go anywhere. Do you know the Lake Region? Wait, here is the map. We have there, just on these four

lakes — Superior, Michigan, Huron, and Erie — sixty thousand ships, amounting to thirty-two million tons, which transport every year three thousand five hundred million tons of merchandise. The problem is to put this fleet and the cities on the lakes — Duluth, Milwaukee, Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, Buffalo, Marionville — in communication with Europe. The lakes empty into the ocean through the St. Lawrence. That is the road to follow. Unfortunately we have a little obstacle to overcome at the outlet of Lake Erie, an obstacle once and a half as high as the Arc de l'Etoile at Paris. I mean Niagara, and also the rapids at the outlet of Lake Ontario. They have made seven or eight canals, with locks which permit the passage of little boats. But we wish a free passage for any transatlantic vessel. This gentleman is about to conclude the affair," and Marsh pointed to the secretary at the telephone. "Our capital has been completed this morning — two hundred million dollars. In two years I shall sail home in the *Jenny* without once disembarking. I wish Marionville to become the Liverpool of the lakes. It has already a hundred thousand inhabitants. In two years we shall have a hundred and fifty thousand; that is equal to your Toulouse. In ten years, two hundred and fifty thousand — that is equal to your Bordeaux — and in twenty years we shall reach the five hundred and seventeen thousand of old Liverpool. We are a young people,

and everything young should begin by progressing. You will excuse me for a few minutes, gentlemen?"

And the indefatigable worker had re-commenced his dictation before his niece had led from the room these degenerate children of slow Europe.

"Is he enough of an American for you?" Corancez whispered to Hautefeuille. "He knows it too well, and he acts his own rôle to the point of caricature. All their race appears in that." Then aloud: "You know, Miss Flossie, we can talk freely of our plan before Pierre. He consents to be my groomsman."

"Ah! how delightful!" the young girl cried; then added gayly: "I had no doubt you would accept. My uncle has asked me to invite you to join our little voyage to Genoa. You will come, then. That will be perfectly delicious. You will be rewarded for your kindness. You will have on board your flirt, Madame de Carlsberg."

As she said this the laughing girl looked the young man in the face. She had spoken without malice, with that simple directness upon which Corancez had justly counted.

The people of the New World have this frankness, which we take for brutality; it results from their profound and total acceptation of facts. Flossie Marsh knew that the presence of Baroness Ely on the yacht would be agreeable to Hautefeuille. Innocent American girl as she was, she did not imagine for a moment

that the relations between this young man and a married woman could exceed the limits of a harmless flirtation or a permissible sentimentality. So it had seemed to her as natural to hazard this allusion to Pierre's sentiments as it would have been to hear an allusion to her own sentiments for Marcel Verdier. Thus it was strangely painful for her to see by the sudden pallor of the young man and the trembling of his lips that she had wounded him. And her face grew very red.

If the Americans in their simplicity are at times wanting in tact, they are sensitive to the highest degree; and these faults of tact which they commit so easily are a real affliction to them. But that blush only aggravated the painful surprise which Hautefeuille had felt at hearing Madame de Carlsberg thus spoken of. By an inevitable and overwhelming association of ideas he recalled Corancez's words, "I am sure that Miss Marsh will overcome your scruples," and the smile with which he said this. The look Madame Bonnacorsi had given him in the train the night before returned to his memory. By an intuition, unreasoned yet irrefutable, he perceived that the secret of his passion, hidden so profoundly in his heart, had been discovered by these three persons.

He quivered in every nerve with shame, revulsion, and distress; his heart palpitated so violently that he could scarcely breathe. The martyrdom of having to

speak at this painful moment was spared him, thanks to Corancez, who saw clearly enough the effect produced upon his friend by the imprudence of the American girl, and, assuming the rôle of host, he began: —

"What do you think, Hautefeuille, of this salon and this smoking-room? Isn't it well arranged? This trimming of light, varnished wood — what neat and virile elegance! And this dining-room? And these cabins? One could spend months, years in them. You see, each one with its separate toilet-room."

And he led on his companion and the young girl herself. He remembered everything, with that astonishing memory for objects possessed by natures like his, created for action, adapted to realities; with his habitual self-assurance, he commented upon everything, from the pikes and guns on the middle deck, awaiting the pirates of the South Seas, to the machinery for filling and emptying the baths, and suddenly he asked Miss Marsh this question, singular enough in a passage of that colossal and luxurious toy which seemed to sum up the grand total of all inventions for the refinement of life: —

"Miss Flossie, may we see the death chamber?"

"If it would interest M. Hautefeuille," said Florence Marsh, who had not ceased to regret her thoughtless remark. "My uncle had an only daughter," she con-

tinued, "who was named Marion, after my poor aunt. You know that Mr. Marsh, who lost his wife when he was very young, named his town after her, Marionville. My cousin died four years ago. My uncle was almost insane with grief. He wished nothing to be altered in the room she occupied on the yacht. He put her statue in it, and she has always around her the flowers she loved in life. Wait, look, but do not go in."

She opened the door, and the young men saw, by the light of two blue-shaded lamps, a room all draped in faded pink. It was filled with a profusion of small objects such as might be possessed by a spoiled child of a railroad magnate — a toilet case of silver and gold, jewels in glass boxes, portraits in carved frames — and in the centre, on a real bed of inlaid wood, lay the statue of the dead girl, white, with closed eyelids, the lips slightly parted, among sheaves of carnations and of orchids. The silence of this strange shrine, the mystery, the delicate perfume of the flowers, the unlooked-for poetry of this posthumous idolatry, in the boat of a yachtsman and a man of business, would, in any other circumstances, have appealed to the romanticism innate in Pierre Hautefeuille's heart. But during all this visit he had had but one thought, — to escape from Miss Marsh and Corancez, to be alone in order to reflect upon the evidence, so painfully unexpected, that his deepest

secret had been discovered. So it was a relief to depart from the boat, and still a torture to have the company of his friend a few minutes longer.

"Did you notice," said Corancez, "how much the dead girl resembles Madame de Chésy? No? Well, when you meet her some time with Marsh, be sure to observe her. The canal by the Great Lakes, his railroad, the buildings of Marionville, his mines, his boat — he forgets them all. He thinks of his dead daughter. If little Madame de Chésy should ask him for the Kohinoor, he would set out to find it, for the mere sake of this resemblance. Isn't it singular, such a sentimental trait in a rogue of his stamp? His character ought to please you. If you are interested in him, you will be able to study him at your leisure on the 13th, 14th, and 15th. And let me thank you again for what you are going to do for me. If you have anything to communicate to me, my address is Genoa, *poste restante*. And now I must return to look after the packing. Will you let me take you part of the way? I see the old coachman whom I told to come here at eleven."

Corancez hailed an empty cab which was passing, drawn by two small Corsican ponies, who saluted the young man with a wink, his "Good day, Monsieur Marius" revealing the familiarity of long conversations between these two Provençaux. Pascal Espérandien, otherwise known as the Old Man, was an alert

little personage and very crafty, the pride of whose life was to make his two rats trot faster than the Russian horses of the grand dukes residing at Cannes. He harnessed them, trimmed them, ornamented them so fantastically that they drew from all Miss Marsh's compatriots, from Antibes to Napoule, the same exclamations of "How lovely, how enchanting, how fascinating!" that they would have uttered before a Raphael or a Worth dress, a polo match or a noted gymnast. Doubtless the wily old man, with his shrewd smile, possessed diplomatic talents which might make him useful in a secret intrigue, for the prudent Corancez never took any other carriage, especially when he had, as on this morning, a rendezvous with the Marquise Andryana. He was to see her for five minutes in the garden of a hotel where she had a call to make. Her carriage was to stand before one of the doors, the Old Man's equipage before another. So nothing could have been more agreeable than Pierre's response to this clandestine *fiancé*.

"Thanks, but I prefer to walk."

"Then good-by," said Corancez, getting into the cab. And, parodying a celebrated verse, "To meet soon again, Seigneur, where you know, with whom you know, for what you know?"

The cab turned the corner of the Rue d'Antibes, and departed with furious speed. Hautefeuille was at last alone. He could finally face the idea which had been

formulating itself in his thoughts with terrible precision ever since Miss Florence Marsh had spoken these simple words, "Your flirt, Madame de Carlsberg."

"They all three know that I love her — the Marquise, Corancez, and Miss Marsh. The look I caught from one of them last night, the remark and the smile of the other, and what the third one said, and her blush at having thought aloud — these are not dreams. They know I love her — But then, Corancez, last night, when he led me to the gambling-table, must have divined my thoughts. Such dissimulation! — is it possible? But why not? He acknowledged it himself awhile ago. To have concealed his sentiments for Madame Bonnacorsi, he must know how to keep a secret. He kept his and I have not kept mine. Who knows but they all three saw me buy the cigarette case? But no. They could not have had the cruelty to speak of it and to let it be spoken of before me. Marius is not malicious, neither is the Marquise, nor Miss Marsh. They know — that is all — they know. But how did they find out?"

Yes, how? With a lover of his susceptibility such a question would of necessity result in one of those self-examinations in which the scruples of conscience develop all their feverish illusions. On the way back to California and at the table where his luncheon was served to him apart, and afterward on a solitary walk

to the picturesque village of Mougins, his life during these last few weeks came back to him, day by day, hour by hour, with a displacement of perspective which presented all the simple incidents of his naïve idyl as irreparable faults, crowned by that last fault, the purchase of the gold box in a public place and in full view of such people.

He recalled his first meeting with Madame de Carlsberg, in the Villa Chésy. How the peculiar beauty of the young woman and her strange charm had captivated him from the start, and how he had permitted himself to gaze upon her unrestrainedly, not dreaming that he was thus attracting attention and causing remarks! He remembered how often he had gone to her house, seizing every opportunity of meeting her and talking with her. The indiscretion of such assiduity could not have passed unperceived, any more than his continued presence at places where he had never gone before.

He saw again the golf field on those mornings when the Baroness Ely seemed so beautiful, in her piquant dress of the bright club colors — red and white. He saw himself at the balls, waiting in a corner of the room until she entered with that enchantment which emanated from every fold of her gown. He remembered how often at the confectioner's, or La Croisette, he had approached her, and how she had always invited him to sit at her table with such grace in her

welcome. Each of these memories recalled her amiability, her delicate indulgence.

The memory of that charm, to which he yielded himself so completely, augmented his self-reproach. He recalled his imprudent actions, so natural when one does not feel one's self to be observed, but which appear to be such faults as soon as one is conscious of suspicion. For example, during the ten days on which the Baroness was absent from Cannes he had not once returned to those places where he had gone simply for the sake of seeing her. No one had met him at the golf field, nor at any evening party, nor at any five o'clock tea. He had not even made a call. Could this coincidence of his retirement with the absence of the Baroness have failed to be remarked? What had been said about it? Since his love had drawn him into this agitated world of pleasure he had often been pained by the light words thrown out at hazard at the women of this society, when they were not present. Had he been simply an object of ridicule, or had they taken advantage of his conduct to calumniate the woman he loved with a love so unhappy, ravaged by all the chimeras of remorse?

The words used by Florence Marsh — "your flirt" — gave a solid basis to these hypotheses. He had always despised the things which this word implied, — that shameful familiarity of a woman with a man, that dangling of her beauty before his desire, all the

vulgarity and indiscretion which this equivocal relationship suggests. Could they think that he had such relations with Madame de Carlsberg? Had this evil interpretation been put upon his impulsiveness? Then he thought of the sorrows which he divined in the life of this unique woman, of the espionage that was spoken of, and again the hall at Monte Carlo appeared to him, and he could not understand why he had not realized the prodigious indelicacy of his action. He felt it now with most pitiful acuteness.

Haunted by these thoughts he prolonged his walk for hours and hours, and when in the twilight, suddenly grown dark and cold, as it happens in the South after days most soft and blue, as he entered the door of his hotel, the *concierge* handed him a letter on which he recognized the writing of Baroness Ely, his hands trembled as he tore open the envelope, sealed with the imprint of an antique stone — the head of Medusa. And if the head of this pagan legend had appeared alive before him he would not have been more overwhelmed than he was by the simple words of this note: —

"DEAR SIR — I have returned to Cannes and I should be happy if you could come to-morrow, at about half-past one, to the Villa Helmholtz. I wish to talk with you upon a serious matter. That is why I set this hour, at which I am most certain of not being interrupted."

And she signed herself, not as in her last letters with her full name, but as in the first she had written

him — Baroness de Sallach Carlsberg. Hautefeuille read and re-read these cold, dry lines. It was evident that the young woman had learned of his purchase at Monte Carlo, and all the agony of his remorse revealed itself in these words, which he cried aloud as he entered his room: —

"She knows! I am lost!"

CHAPTER IV

LOVERS' RESOLUTIONS

THE note which had thus brought Pierre's anxiety to its extreme represented the first act in a plan invented by Madame Brion to put an immediate and irreparable end to a sentiment for which her friendly insight had led her to predict frightful suffering, a possible tragedy, a certain catastrophe. After Madame de Carlsberg's sudden and passionate confidences, she had said to herself that if she did not succeed in immediately separating these two beings, drawn to each other by such an instinctive attraction, the young man would not be slow to discover the sentiment he inspired in the woman he loved. It was only thanks to his remarkable ingenuousness and candor that he had not already discovered it.

When he knew the truth, what would happen? Ingenuous and candid though she was herself, Louise Brion could not evade the true answer to this question. As soon as an understanding took place between Hautefeuille and Ely, she would go to the end of her desire. She had too clearly revealed in her confes-

sion the indomitable audacity of her character, her need of complying with the demands of her passions. She would become the young man's mistress. Although the conversation of the night before had imposed upon Louise the evidence of faults already committed by her friend, neither her mind nor her heart could entertain the thought of these faults. The mere idea of this *liaison* filled her with a shudder of fright, almost of horror. All through the night she had tried to think of some way to obtain the only escape she could see for Ely, the voluntary departure of Hautefeuille.

Her first thought was to appeal to his delicacy. The portrait Madame de Carlsberg had drawn of him, his interesting face, his frank and honest look, the naïveté of his amorous action in buying the gold box, all revealed an exquisite fineness of nature. If she should write him, bravely, simply, an unsigned letter, speaking of that action, of that purchase which might have been, and no doubt had been, seen by others too? If on this account she should beg him to leave in order to save Madame de Carlsberg from trouble? During her long and feverish insomnia she had tried to formulate this letter, without discovering expressions which satisfied her.

It was so difficult to make such a request without letting it signify, "Go, because she loves you!"

Then in the morning, when she had wakened from

the tardy sleep that ended this night of agony, a chance accident, commonplace enough, but in which her piety saw something providential, gave her an unexpected excuse for pleading, not with the young man at a distance, but with Madame de Carlsberg herself and at once. While reading distractedly in bed one of those newspapers of the Riviera, journals of international snobbism which communicate information concerning all these arrant aristocrats, she discovered the arrival at Cairo, of M. Olivier du Prat, secretary of the Embassy, and his wife; and she rose at once to show Ely these two lines of mundane news, so insignificant, yet so full of menace for her.

"If they are at Cairo," she said to the Baroness, "it means that their Nile trip is over, and that they think of returning. What is the natural route for them? From Alexandria to Marseilles. And if he is so near his friend, this man will wish to see him."

"It is true," said Ely, her heart beating wildly as she read the letters of that name, Olivier du Prat.

"It is true," she repeated. "They will meet again. Was I not right last night?"

"See," cried Louise Brion, "what it would have been if you had not had thus far the strength to fight against your sentiment. See what it will be if you do not put an end to it forever."

And she continued describing with all the eloquence of her passionate friendship a plan of conduct which

suddenly occurred to her as the wisest and most effectual.

"You must take this opportunity which is offered to you. You will never have a better one. You must have the young man come, and speak to him yourself about the purchase he made last night. Tell him that others have seen it; show him your astonishment at his indiscretion; tell him that his assiduity has been noticed. For the sake of your welfare and your reputation command him to go away. A little firmness for a few minutes and it will all be done. He is not what you paint him, what I feel him to be, if he does not obey your request. Ah! believe me, the one way to love him is to save him from this tragedy, which is not simply a far-off possibility, but an immediate and inevitable danger."

Ely listened, but made no reply. Worn out by the terrible emotion of her confidence on the previous night, she had no strength left to resist the tender suggestions which appealed to her love itself, to struggle against her love. There is, in fact, in these complete passions an instinctive and violent desire for extreme resolutions. When these sentiments cannot find satisfaction in perfect happiness, they obtain a kind of grateful relief in their absolute frustration. Filliug our soul to the exclusion of all else, they bear it incessantly to one or the other of the two poles, ecstasy and despair, without resting for a moment

between them. Having come to this stage of her passion, it followed of necessity, as Louise Brion had clearly seen, that the Baroness Ely should either become the young man's mistress, or that she should put between herself and him the insurmountable barrier of a separation before the *liaison* — secret romance of so many women, both virtuous and otherwise. Yes! how many women have thus, in a delirium of renouncement, dug an abyss between them and a secretly idolized being, who never suspects this idolatry or this immolation. To the innocent ones, the anticipation of the remorse which would follow their fault gives the requisite energy; the others, the culpable, feel, as Madame de Carlsberg felt so strongly, the inability to efface the past, and they prefer the exalted martyrdom of sacrifice to the intolerable bitterness of a joy forever poisoned by the atrocious jealousy of that indestructible past.

Another influence aided in overcoming the young woman's spirit of revolt. Stranger as she was to all religious faith, she did not, like her pious friend, attach anything providential to this commonplace accident, — a newspaper account of a diplomatist's voyage, — but had acquired, through her very incredulity, that unconscious fatalism which is the last superstition of the sceptic. The sight of these fine printed syllables, "Olivier du Prat," a few hours after the night's conversation, had filled her with that feeling

of presentiment, harder to brave than real danger for certain natures, like hers, made up of decision and action.

"You are right," she answered, in the broken accent of an irremediable renunciation, "I will see him, I will speak to him, and all will be finished forever."

It was with this resolution, made in truth with the fullest strength of her heart, that she arrived at Cannes on the afternoon of the same day, accompanied by Madame Brion, who did not wish to leave her; and, as soon as she arrived, she had, almost under the dictation of her faithful friend, written and despatched the letter which overwhelmed Hautefeuille. She truly believed herself to be sincere in her resolution to separate from him, and yet if she had been able to read to the bottom of her heart, she might have seen, from a very trifling act, how fragile this resolution was, and how much she was possessed by thoughts of love. No sooner had she written to him from whom she wished to separate forever than, at the same place, and with the same ink, she wrote two letters to two persons of her acquaintance, in whose love-affairs she was the confidante, and to some extent the accomplice, — Miss Florence Marsh and the Marquise Andryana Bonnacorsi.

She invited them to lunch with her on the morrow, thus obeying a profound instinct which impels a woman who loves and suffers to seek the company of women

who are also in love, with whom she may talk of sentimental things, of the happiness which warms them, who will pity her sorrow, if she tells them of it, who will understand her and whom she will understand. Usually, as she had said the night before, the hesitation of the sentimental and timid Italian woman fatigued her, and in the passion of the American girl for the Archduke's assistant, there was an element of deliberate positivism, which jarred upon her native impulsiveness. But the young widow and the young girl were two women in love, and that sufficed, in this season of melancholy, to make it delightful, almost necessary, to see them. She little thought that this impulsive and natural invitation would provoke a violent scene with her husband, or that a conjugal conflict would arise from it, whose final episode was to have a tragic influence upon the issue of that growing passion, which her reason had sworn to renounce.

Having arrived at Cannes at three o'clock in the afternoon, she had not seen him during the rest of the day. She knew that he had been with Marcel Verdier in the laboratory, nor was she surprised to see him appear at the dinner hour, accompanied by his aide-de-camp, Comte von Laubach, the professional spy of His Highness, without a sign of interest in her health, without a question as to how she had spent the past ten days.

The Prince had been in his youth one of the brav-

est and most handsome of the incomparable cavaliers of his country, and the old soldier was recognizable in the figure of this scientific maniac, which had remained slender in spite of the fact that he was approaching his sixtieth year, in the tone of command which his slightest accents retained, in his martial face, scarred by a sabre at Sadowa, in his long mustache of grizzly red. But what one never forgot after seeing the singular man was his eyes — eyes of an intense blue, very bright and almost savagely restless, under the pale, reddish brows of formidable thickness. The Archduke had the eccentric habit of always wearing, even with his evening dress, heavy laced shoes, which permitted him, as soon as the dinner was over, to go out on foot, accompanied sometimes by his aide-de-camp, sometimes by Verdier, for an endless nocturnal walk. He prolonged them at times till three o'clock in the morning, having no other means of gaining a little sleep for his morbid nerves. This extreme nervousness was betrayed by his delicate hands, burned with acids and deformed by tools of the laboratory, whose fingers twitched incessantly in uncontrollable movements.

From all his actions could be divined the dominant trait of his character, a moral infirmity for which there is no precise term, the inability to continue any sensation or to persist in any effort of the will. That was the secret of the singular uneasiness which this

man, so distinguished in certain ways, imparted to those around him, and from which he was the first to suffer. One felt that in the hands of this strangely irritable person every enterprise would fail, and that a kind of inward and irresistible frenzy prevented him from putting himself in harmony with any environment, any circumstance, any necessity. This superior nature was incapable of submission to facts.

Perhaps the secret of his unbalanced condition lay in the fixed idea that he had been at one time so near the throne and had lost it forever, that he had seen irreparable faults committed in politics and in war, that he had known of them while they were taking place and had not been able to prevent them.

Thus at the beginning of the war of 1866 he had, it was said, planned a campaign which might have changed the face of Europe at this end of the century. Instead he had to risk his life to execute manœuvres whose certain failure he foresaw. Every year, on the anniversary of the famous battle at which he had been wounded, he became literally insane for forty-eight hours. He was equally so whenever he heard mentioned the name of some great revolutionary soldier.

The Archduke did not forgive himself for his weakness in continuing the benefits attached to his title and rank when his tastes for abstract theories and the bitterness of his blighted destiny had led him to embrace the worst convictions of anarchistic socialism.

With all that, prodigiously learned, a great reader, and a great conversationalist, he seemed to take revenge upon his own inconsistencies in conduct and in action by the acuteness of his criticism. Never did his lips express admiration without some disparaging and cruel reservation. Only scientific research, with its impregnable certitudes, appeared to communicate to this disordered intelligence a little repose, and, as it were, a steadier equilibrium.

Since the time when his disagreements with his wife had resulted in that species of moral divorce imposed by higher authority, his researches had absorbed him more than ever.

Retired at Cannes, where he was kept by the beginning of an attack of asthma, he had worked so hard that he had transformed himself from an amateur into a professional, and a series of important discoveries in electricity had given him a semi-reputation among specialists. His enemies had spread abroad the report, which Corancez had echoed, that he had simply published under his own name the work of Marcel Verdier, a graduate of the École Normale, attached for some years to his laboratory. In justice to the Archduke, it must be said that this calumny had not lessened the enthusiasm and jealous affection which the strange man felt for his assistant. For the final trait of this being, so wavering, uncertain, and, in consequence, profoundly, passionately unjust, was that his only

attachments were infatuations. The story of his relations with his wife was the same as with all the relations formed in a life made up of alternations between passionate sympathy and inordinate antipathy for the same persons, and for no other cause than that incapacity of self-control, an incapacity which had made him, with all his gifts, tyrannical, unamiable, and profoundly unhappy, and, to borrow a vulgar but too justifiable epigram from Corancez, the great Failnre of the Almanach de Gotha.

Madame de Carlsberg had had too long an experience with her husband's character not to understand it admirably, and she had suffered too much from it to avoid being, on her side, exceedingly unjust toward him. A bad temper is of all faults the one that women are least willing to pardon in a man, perhaps because it is the most opposed to the most virile of virtues, steadfastness.

She was too keen not to discern in that tormented face the approaching storm, as sailors read the face of the sky and the sea.

When on this evening of her return to Cannes, she found herself sitting at the table in front of the Archduke, she easily divined that the dinner would not end without some of those ferocious words with which he relieved his ill temper. At the first glance she understood that he had another violent grievance against her. What? Had he already been informed by that in-

famous Judas, in his feline manner, of how she had conducted herself at the gambling-table the night before, and was he, the democratic prince, with one of his customary resumptions of pride, preparing to make her feel that such Bohemian manners were not becoming to their rank? Was he offended — this inconsistency would not have astonished her any more than the other — because she had stayed at Monte Carlo all the week, without sending a word, except the despatch to the *maître d'hôtel* to announce her return.

Her heart was so full of pain at the thought of her resolution that she felt that kind of insensibility which follows moral suffering. So she did not pay attention during the dinner to the fierce sallies with which the Archduke, addressing Madame Brion, abused in turn Monte Carlo and the women of fashion, the Frenchmen on the coast, and the foreign colony — the wealthy class, in short, and all society. The livery servants were moving silently about the table, and their knee-breeches, silk stockings, and powdered wigs lent a contrast of inexpressible irony to the words of the master of this princely house. The aide-de-camp, with a wheedling mixture of politeness and perfidy, replied to the witticisms of the Archduke in such a way as to exasperate them, while Madame Brion, growing more and more red, submitted to the assault of insolent sarcasms, with the idea that she was suffering for

Ely, who scarcely paid the slightest attention to such whimsical outbursts as this: —

"Their pleasures are the measure of a society, and that is what I like on this coast. You see in all their perfection the folly and the infamy of the plutocrats. — Their wives? They amuse themselves like jades, and the men like blackguards. — The taxes, the laws, the magistrates, the army, the clergy — all this social machinery which works for the profit of the rich, accomplishes what? The protection of a gilded debauchery of which we have a perfect specimen on this coast. — I admire the naïveté of socialists, who, before an aristocracy of this kind, talk of reforms! A gangrenous limb should simply be burnt and cut off. But the great fault of modern revolutionists is their respect. Happily the weakness and folly of the ruling class are exposing themselves everywhere with such magnificent ingenuousness that the people will end by perceiving them, and when the millions of workingmen who nourish this handful of parasites make a move — a move — ah! we'll laugh, we'll laugh! — Science will make it so easy to prepare for action. Make all the children of the proletariat electricians and chemists, and in a generation the thing will be done."

Whenever he proffered declarations of this order the Archduke glared around him with a physiognomy so menacing that no one thought of smiling at his paradoxes, as comical as they were ineffectual in these

opulent surroundings. Those who were acquainted with the secrets of contemporary history remembered that a legend, though calumnious, associated the name of the "Red Archduke" with a mysterious attempt made upon the life of the head of his own family. The sanguinary dream of a demagogic Cæsarism was too plainly visible in those eyes, which never looked at one without a menace, and one felt one's self to be in the presence of a tyrant whom circumstances had thwarted, but by so little that one trembled.

Usually after he had thus thrown out some sinister witticism no one replied, and the dinner continued in a silence of embarrassment and oppression, in which the disappointed despot revelled for a time. Then it occasionally happened that, having relieved his spleen, he would show the seductive side of his nature, his remarkable lucidity of mind, and his immense knowledge of actual facts. This evening he was doubtless tormented by some peculiar agitation; for he did not disarm until, just as they returned to the parlor, a remark of Madame de Carlsberg to Madame Brion brought forth an outburst which revealed the true cause for this terrible mood.

"We shall ask Flossie Marsh about that. She will lunch with us to-morrow," the Baroness had said.

"May I have five minutes' conversation with you?" suddenly demanded the Prince; and, leading her aside, careless of the witnesses of this conjugal scene, "You

have invited Miss Marsh to lunch to-morrow?" he continued.

"Certainly," she replied. "Does that annoy Your Highness?"

"The house is yours," said the Archduke, "but you will not be surprised if I forbid Verdier to be there. —Don't interrupt.—For some time I have observed that you favor the project of this girl, who has taken it into her head to marry that boy. I do not wish this marriage to take place. And it shall not take place."

"I am ignorant of Miss Marsh's intentions," replied the Baroness, whose pale cheeks had grown red as she listened to her husband's discourse. "I invite her because she is my friend, and I am pleased to see her. As for M. Verdier, he seems to be of an age to know whether or not it is best for him to marry, without taking orders from any one. Besides, if he wishes to talk to Miss Marsh, he has no need of my intermediation, and if he was pleased to dine with her this evening—"

"He has dined with her this evening?" interrupted the Prince in his violent exasperation. "You know of it? Answer. Be frank."

"Your Imperial Highness may entrust other persons with this espionage," said the young woman, proudly, throwing at Monsieur von Laubach a glance of mingled contempt and defiance.

"Madame, no ironies," exclaimed the Archduke. "I will not endure them. I wish to give you a message for your friend, and if you do not deliver it I will speak to her myself. Tell her that I am aware of all her intrigues. I know, understand me, I know that she doesn't love this young man, but is an instrument in the service of her uncle, who has heard of a discovery that we have made, Verdier and I, in my residence," and he pointed in the direction of the laboratory. "It is a revolution in electric railroads, this invention; but to have it, it is necessary to have the inventor. I am neither to be bought nor married. No more is Verdier to be bought, but he is young, he is innocent, and Mr. Marsh has employed his niece. I perceive that he has brought you to side with him, and that you are working for him. Listen to what I say: Visit them, the uncle and the niece, as much as you like; join their parties at Monte Carlo and anywhere. If you like *rastaquouères*, that is your affair. You are free. But do not mix with this intrigue or you will pay dearly for it. I shall know the point to strike you in. With her uncle's millions, let this girl buy a name and a title, as they all do. There is no lack of English marquises, French dukes, and Roman princes to sell their armorial devices, their ancestors, and their persons. But this man of millions, my friend, my pupil — hands off! That Yankee would turn his genius into a new dollar-coining ma-

chine. Never that; never, never. This is what I beg you to say to that girl; and no remonstrance from you. — Monsieur von Laubach."

"Monseigneur?"

Scarcely had the aide-de-camp time to take leave of the two ladies, so precipitately did the Archduke depart, with the air of a man who could no longer contain himself.

"And that is the secret of his fury," said Madame Brion, when her friend had repeated the brutal discourse of the Prince. "It is very unjust. But I am glad it is only that. I was so afraid he had heard of your play last night, and especially that imprudence. You are going to cancel your invitation to Miss Florence?"

"I?" said the Baroness, shrugging her shoulders, and her noble face wore an expression of disgust. "There was a time when this boorishness crushed me; a time when it revolted me. To-day I care no more than that for this brute and all his rage."

While saying this she had lit a Russian cigarette, with a long paper stem, at a little lamp used for this purpose, and from her contemptuous lips she blew a ring of smoke, which rose, opening and stretching out till it was dissipated in the warm and perfumed atmosphere of the little room. It was an atmosphere of intimacy surrounding the two friends, in this bright parlor, with the soft shades of its tapestry, the old

paintings, the precious furniture, the vague green of the conservatory behind one of the glass doors, and everywhere flowers — the beautiful living flowers of the South, interwoven with threads of sunlight. Lamps, large and small, veiled in shades of supple silk, radiated through this retreat an attenuated light which blended with the clear, gay fire. Ah, the unfortunate would little envy these surroundings of the rich, if they but knew the secret agony for which these surroundings so often serve as a theatre! Ely de Carlsberg had sunk upon a lounge; she was saying: —

"What do you suppose these wretched things matter to me, with the pain you know is in my heart? I shall receive Flossie Marsh to-morrow, and for several days after, and the Archduke may be as angry as he likes. He says he knows the place to attack me. There is only one, and I am going to strike it myself. It is as though he should threaten to fight a duel with some one who has determined to commit suicide."

"But do you not think he is right about Marsh's calculations?" asked Madame Brion to arrest the crisis of the revolt which she saw approaching.

"It is quite possible," said the Baroness. "He is an American, and for those people a sentiment is a fact like any other, and is to be utilized as much as possible. But admitting that he speculates on Flossie's passion for a savant and an inventor, does the uncle's speculation prove that the sentiment of the

niece is not sincere? Poor Flossie," she added in a tone that once more vibrated with her inward torment. "I hope she will not allow herself to be separated from the man she loves. She would suffer too much, and if it is necessary to help her not to lose him, I will help her."

These two successive cries betrayed such distress, and in consequence so much uncertainty still remaining in the wise resolution they had made together, that the faithful friend was terrified. The thought which she had had the night before, and had rejected as being too difficult to execute, the thought of appealing directly to the magnanimity of the young man, seized her again with excessive force. This time, she gave free rein to it, and the next morning a messenger, found at the station, delivered at the Hôtel des Palmes the following letter, which Pierre Hautefeuille opened and read after a long night of anxiety and cruel insomnia: —

"MONSIEUR — I trust to your delicacy not to seek to know who I am, or the motive which leads me to write you these lines. They come from one who knows you, although you do not know her, and who esteems you profoundly. I have no doubt that you will listen to this appeal made to your honor. A word will suffice to show you how much your honor is concerned in ceasing to compromise, most involuntarily, I am sure, the peace and the reputation of a person who is not free, and whose elevated situation is exposed to much envy. You were seen, Monsieur, the night before last, in the roulette hall at Monte Carlo, when

you bought an article which that person had just sold to a merchant. If that were an isolated circumstance, it would not have such a dangerous significance. But you must yourself perceive that your attitude during the last few weeks could not have escaped malignant comments. The person concerned is not free. She has suffered a great deal in her private life, and the slightest injury done to the one upon whom her situation depends might provoke a catastrophe for her. Perhaps she will never tell you herself what pain your action, of which she has been informed, has caused her. Be an honest man, Monsieur, and do not try to enter into a life which you can only trouble. Do not compromise a noble-hearted woman, who has all the more right to your respect from the fact that she does not distrust you. Have, then, the courage to do the only thing that can prevent calumny, if it has not already begun, and that can put an end to it if it had begun. Leave Cannes, Monsieur, for some weeks. The day will come when you will be glad to think you have done your duty, your whole duty, and that you have given to a noble woman the one proof of devotion that you could be permitted to offer — a consideration for her welfare and her honor."

In the famous story of Daniel DeFoe, that prodigious epitome of all the profound emotions of the human heart, there is a celebrated page which symbolizes the peculiar terror we feel at revelations that are absolutely, tragically unexpected. It is when Robinson sees with a shudder the print of a bare foot on the shore of his island.

A like convulsive trembling seized Pierre Hautefeuille as he read this letter, in which he saw the proof after twenty-four hours of incertitude — the indisputable overwhelming proof — that his action had

been seen. By whom? But what mattered the name of the witness, now that Madame de Carlsberg was informed? His secret instinct had not deceived him. She had summoned him in order to reprove his indiscretion, perhaps to banish him forever from her presence. The certainty that the subject of this interview would be the act for which he now reproached himself as for a crime was so intolerable to the lover that he was seized with the idea of not going to the rendezvous, of never seeing again that offended woman, of fleeing anywhere far away. He took up the letter, saying, "It is true; there is nothing but to go!" Wildly, yet mechanically, as though a mesmeric suggestion had emanated from the written words on that little sheet of paper, he rang, ordered the time-table, his bill, and his trunk. If the express to Italy, instead of leaving late in the afternoon, had left at about eleven, perhaps the poor young man, in that hour of semi-madness, would have precipitately taken flight — an action which in a few hours was to appear as senseless as it now appeared necessary.

But he was forced to wait, and, the first crisis once over, he felt that he should not, that he could not go without explaining himself. He did not think of justifying himself. In his own eyes he was unpardonable. And yet he did not wish Madame de Carlsberg to condemn him without a plea for the delicacy of his intentions. What would he say to her, how-

ever? During the hours that separated him from his rendezvous, how many discourses he imagined without suspecting that the imperious force that attracted him to the Villa Helmholtz was not the desire to plead his cause! It was toward the sensation of her presence that he was irresistibly moving, the one idea around which everything centres in that heart of a lover, at which everything ends, from the most justifiable bitterness to the extremest timidity.

When the young man entered the parlor of the Villa Helmholtz, the excess of his emotions had thrown him into that state of waking somnambulism in which the soul and body obey an impulse of which they are scarcely conscious. This state is analogous to that of a resolute man passing through a very great danger — a similitude which proves that the two fundamental instincts of our nature, that of self-preservation and that of love, are the work of impersonal forces, exterior and superior to the narrow domain of our conscious will.

At such times our senses are at once super-acute and paralyzed, — super-acute to the slightest detail that corresponds to the emotion that occupies us, paralyzed for everything else. Thinking afterward of those minutes so decisive in his life, Hautefeuille could never remember what road he had taken from the hotel to the villa, nor what acquaintances he had met on the way.

He was not roused from this lucid dream until he entered the first and larger of the two parlors, empty at this moment. A perfume floated there, mingled with the scent of flowers, the favorite perfume of Madame de Carlsberg,—a composition of gray amber, chypre, and Russian cologne. He had scarcely time to breathe in that odor which brought Ely's image so vividly before him when a second door opened, voices came to him, but he distinguished only one, which, like the perfume, went to his heart.

A few steps further and he was before Madame de Carlsberg herself, who was talking with Madame Brion, the Marquise Bonnacorsi, and the pretty Vicomtesse de Chésy. Further on, by the window near the conservatory, Flossie Marsh stood talking with a tall, blond young man, badly dressed, by no means handsome, yet revealing under his dishevelled hair the bright face of a savant, the frank smile, the clear meditative eyes. It was Marcel Verdier, whom the young girl had boldly forewarned by a note, in the American manner, and who, kept from lunching by the Archduke, had escaped for ten minutes from the laboratory in order to get to her.

Neither was the Baroness seated. She was pacing the floor in an effort to disguise the nervousness which was brought to its extreme by the arrival of him she awaited. But how could he have suspected this? How could he have divined from her classic,

tailor-made walking dress of blue serge that she had not been able that morning to remain indoors? She had been within sight of his hotel, as he had so often been near the Villa Helmholtz, to see the house and to return with beating heart. And how could he have read the interest in the tender, blue eyes of Madame de Bonnacorsi, or in the soft brown eyes of Madame Brion a solicitude which to a lover capable of observing would have given reason for hope? Hautefeuille saw distinctly but one thing, — the uneasiness which appeared in Madame de Carlsberg's eyes and which he at once interpreted as a sign of measureless reproach. That was almost enough to deprive him of the force to answer in the commonplace phrases of politeness; he took a seat by the Marquise at the invitation of the romantic Italian, who was moved to pity by his visible emotion.

Meanwhile the gay Madame de Chésy, the pretty blonde, whose eyes were as lively as those of Andryana Bonnacorsi were deep, was smiling on the newcomer. This smile formed little dimples in her fresh, rounded face, while under the cap of otter skin, and with her light figure in a jacket of the same fur, her small hands playing with her muff, her slender feet in their varnished boots, she was one of those charming little images of frivolity toward whom the world does well to be indulgent, for their presence suffices to render gay and frivolous as themselves the

most embarrassing occasions and the most ominous situations. With all that Madame Brion knew, and all that Madame de Bonnacorsi thought, and with all the feelings of the Baroness Ely and Pierre Hautefeuille, his arrival would have made the conversation by far too difficult and painful, if the light Parisienne had not continued her pretty bird-like babble:—

"You! I ought not to recognize you," she said to Pierre Hautefeuille. "For ten days," she added, turning to Madame de Carlsberg, "yes, ever since I dined beside him here the night before your departure; yes, for eight days, he has disappeared. And I did not write about it to his sister, who entrusted him to me. For she entrusted you to me, that is positive, and not to the young ladies of Nice and Monte Carlo."

"But I have not been away from Cannes for a week," Pierre replied, blushing in spite of himself.

Madame de Chésy's remark had pointed too plainly to the significant coincidence of his disappearance and the absence of Madame de Carlsberg.

"And what were you doing only last night at the table of *trente-et-quarante?*" the young woman asked, teasingly. "If your sister knew of that; she who thinks her brother is basking prudently in the sun!"

"Don't scold him," interrupted Madame Bonnacorsi. "We brought him back with us."

"And you didn't finish telling us of your adventure," Madame de Carlsberg added.

The innocent teasing of Madame de Chésy had displeased her, because of the embarrassment it had caused in Hautefeuille. Now that he was there, living and breathing in the little room, she, too, felt that sensation of a loved one's presence which overpowers the strongest will. Never had the young man's face appeared more noble, his expression more attractive, his lips more delicate, his movements more graceful, his whole being more worthy of love. She discerned in his attitude that mingling of respect and passion, of timidity and idolatry irresistible to women who have suffered from the brutality of the male, and who dream of a love without hate, a tenderness without jealousy, voluptuous rapture devoid of violence.

She felt like crying to Yvonne de Chésy, "Stop. Don't you see that you are wounding him?" But she knew well that the thoughtless woman had not an atom of malice in her heart. She was one of the modern women of Paris, very innocent with a very bad tone, playing childishly with scandal, but very virtuous at heart — one of those imprudent women who sometimes pay with their honor and happiness for that innocent desire to astonish and amuse. And she continued, revealing her whole character in the anecdote which Hautefeuille's arrival had interrupted: —

"The end of my adventure? I have already told

you that this gentleman took me for one of those demoiselles. At Nice, a little woman, dining all alone at a little table in a little restaurant. And he was doing his best to call my attention with his 'hum! hum!'—I felt like offering him gumdrops—and his 'waiter!' perfectly useless to make me turn. And I did turn, not much, just enough, to let him see me—without laughing. I wanted to badly enough! Finally I paid, rose, and left. He paid. He rose. He left. I didn't know what to do to get to the train. He followed me. I let myself be followed.—Have you ever wondered, when you think of those demoiselles, what they say to them to begin with?"

"Things which I think I should be rather afraid to hear," said Madame Bonnacorsi.

"I don't think so any longer," Madame de Chésy replied; "for it is just as stupid as what these gentlemen say to us. I stopped before the window of a florist. He stopped beside me on my left. I looked at the bouquets. He looked at the bouquets. I heard his old 'hum! hum!' He was going to speak. 'Those are fine roses, madame,' he said. 'Yes, monsieur, they are fine roses.' 'Are you very fond of flowers, madame?' I was just going to say, 'Yes, monsieur, I am very fond of flowers,' when a voice on my right called out, 'Well, Yvonne, you here?' And I was face to face with the Grand Duchess Vera

Paulovna, and at the same moment I saw my follower turning the color of the roses we had been looking at together, as he, stammering, bowed before Her Imperial Highness, and she, with her Russian accent, 'My dear, allow me to present the Count Serge Kornow, one of my most charming compatriots.' Tableau!"

The laughing woman had scarcely finished her account of this childish prank, told with the inexplicable but well-known pleasure which women of society find in the contact with the *demi-monde,* when the sudden entrance of a new personage into the parlor arrested the laughter or the reproof of the friends who had been listening to this gay narrative.

It was no other than the Archduke Henry Francis, his face red as it usually was, his feet in heavy laced shoes, his tall, thin body in a suit of dark clothes whose stains and grime spoke of the laboratory. Faithful to his threat of the previous night, he had prevented Verdier from lunching at the table of the Baroness; neither had he been present himself. The master and the pupil had eaten, as they often did, between two experiments, standing in their working aprons beside one of the furnaces. Then the Prince had retired, ostensibly for a siesta, it not appearing whether he had really wished to rest, or had planned a decisive proof, by which to measure the intimacy already existing between Miss Marsh and his assistant. He had, of course, not mentioned the name of any

guest to Verdier, nor had Verdier spoken of this matter. So when on entering the parlor he saw the American girl and the young man talking familiarly apart, a look of veritable fury came into his face.

His eyes glared from one group to the other. If he had had the power at that moment, he would have put them all in irons, his wife because she was certainly to blame for this treason, Madame Brion and Madame Bonnacorsi because Madame de Carlsberg loved them; Madame de Chésy and Hautefeuille because they were the complacent witnesses of this *tête-à-tête!* In his imperious voice, which he could scarcely control, he called from one end of the room to the other:—

"Monsieur Verdier!"

Verdier turned. His shock at seeing the Prince, his humiliation at being summoned in this way before the woman he loved, his impatience with a yoke borne so long, were audible in the accent with which he answered:—

"Monseigneur?"

"I need you in the laboratory," said the Archduke; "please come, and come at once."

Now it was the eyes of the assistant that shone with fury. For a few moments the spectators of this odious scene could observe the tragic combat of pride and gratitude in the face of this superior man so unworthily humiliated. The Archduke had been peculiarly kind to the young man's family. A dog

unjustly beaten has that way of looking at his master; will he fly at his throat or obey him? Doubtless Verdier, knowing the Archduke, feared to arouse the anger of that madman and a burst of insulting insolence against Florence Marsh. Perhaps, too, he thought that his position of an employee under obligations permitted but one dignified course — to oppose his own correctness of deportment to the unqualified roughness of his master.

"I am coming, monseigneur," he replied, and, taking Miss Marsh's hand for the first time, he dared to kiss it. "You will excuse me, mademoiselle," he said, "for having to leave you, but I hope to be able to call before long — mesdames, monsieur."

And he followed his redoubtable patron, who had departed as abruptly as he had entered, when he saw Verdier raise to his lips the hand of Miss Marsh.

Every one remained standing in silence, the silence that follows a gross breach of politeness, which the company cannot criticise aloud. Neither Madame Brion nor Madame Bonnacorsi nor Madame de Chésy dared to look at Madame de Carlsberg, who had faced the Prince with defiance and now trembled with anger under the affront which her husband had inflicted upon her by so demeaning himself at the very doors of her own parlor.

Florence Marsh, bending over a table, pretended to be hunting for the gloves, handkerchief, and smelling

salts which she had left there, doubtless endeavoring to hide the expression of her face. As for Hautefeuille, ignorant of the under side of this society, except for the indiscretions shrewdly measured out by Corancez, knowing absolutely nothing of the relations between Marcel Verdier and the American girl, he would not have been a lover if he had not connected this outburst of the Prince with the fixed idea which possessed him. Beyond doubt the espionage had done its work. The Archduke had learned of his indiscretion. How much this indiscretion was to blame for the ferocious humor of Madame de Carlsberg's husband, the young man could not tell. What appeared to him but too certain, after he had met the terrible eyes of the Prince, was that his presence was odious to this man, and whence could arise that aversion if not from reports, alas, but too well founded.

Ah, how could he beg pardon of the loved one for having added new troubles to all her others? But the silence was broken by Madame de Chésy, who, after looking at her watch, kissed the Baroness and said: —

"I shall be late for the train. I dine at Monte Carlo to-night. But that will be all over after the carnival! Adieu, dear, dear Ely."

"And we, too, must go," said Madame Bonnacorsi, who had taken Miss Marsh's arm while Yvonne de Chésy was leaving, "I shall try to console this tall girl a little."

"But I have consoled myself," replied Florence, adding with a tone that was singularly firm: "One always succeeds in anything that one wishes, if it is wished enough. Shall we walk?" she asked of the Marquise.

"Then you will go through the garden, and I'll accompany you for a little air," said Madame Brion. And, kissing Ely, she said aloud: "Dear, I shall be back in a quarter of an hour," and added, in a whisper, "Have courage."

The door through which they passed into the garden closed. Ely de Carlsberg and Pierre Hautefeuille were at last alone. Both of them had long meditated over the words they should speak at this interview. Both had come to it with a fixed determination, which was the same; for she had decided to ask of him precisely what he had decided to offer, — his departure. But both had been confused by the unexpected scene they had witnessed.

It had moved the young woman especially in every fibre of her being; the wild spirit of revolt, which had been dormant under her growing love, rose again in her heart. Her wounded pride, soothed, almost healed by that gentle influence, suddenly reopened and bled. She felt anew the hardness of the fate which placed her, in spite of all, at the mercy of that terrible Prince, the evil genius of her youth.

As for Hautefeuille, all the legends gathered here

and there about the tyranny and jealousy of the Archduke had suddenly taken shape before his eyes. That vision of the man and wife, face to face, one menacing, the other outraged, which had been so intolerable even to imagine, had been realized in an unforgetable picture during the five minutes that the Prince was in the room. That was enough to make him another man in this interview. Natures like his, pure and delicate, are liable to hesitations and indecisions which appear feeble, almost childish, so long as they are not confronted by a clear situation and a positive duty. It is enough for them to think they could be helpful to one they love in order to find in the sincerity of their devotion all the energy which they seem to lack. Pierre had felt that he could not even bear the look of Baroness Ely the moment he read in it the knowledge of his action. But now he was ready to tell her himself of this action, naturally, simply, in his irresistible and passionate desire to expiate his fault, if it were to blame for her suffering, which he had witnessed with an aching heart.

"Monsieur," she began, after that silence which precedes an explanation, and which is more painful than the explanation itself, "I have written you that we must have a conversation upon a rather serious and difficult subject. But I wish you to be assured of one thing at the start — if in the course of our conversation I have to say anything that pains you,

know that it will cost me a great deal;" she repeated, "a great deal."

"Ah, madame," he answered, "you are afraid of being hard on me when you have the right to be so severe. What I wish to assure you of at the start is that your reproaches could not equal my self-reproach! Yes," he continued, in a tone of passionate remorse, "after what I have seen and understood, how can I ever forgive myself for having caused you an annoyance, even were it but the slightest. I understand it all. I know (from an anonymous letter that came with yours) that what I did the night before last was seen, — my purchase of the case which you had just sold. I know that you have been told of it, and I may divine what you think. I do not ask you to pardon an indiscretion whose gravity I should have felt at once. But then I didn't thiuk. I saw the merchant take that case, which I had seen you use so often. The thought of that object, associated with your image in my mind — the thought of its being sold the next day in a shop of that horrible locality, and being bought, perhaps, by one of those frightful women like those around me near the table — yes, this idea was too strong for my prudence, too strong for my duty of reserve regarding you. You see, I do not attempt to justify myself. But perhaps I have the right to assure you that even in my thoughtless indiscretion there was still a respect for you."

"I have never doubted your delicacy," said Madame de Carlsberg.

She had been moved to the bottom of her heart by this naïve supplication. She felt so keenly the contrast of his youth and tenderness with the brutal manners of the Prince a quarter of an hour before in this same place. And then, as she had recognized the hand of Louise Brion in the anonymous letter, she was touched by that secret proof of friendship, and she attempted to bring the conversation to the point which her faithful friend had so strongly urged — timid and fruitless effort now to conceal the trouble in her eyes, the involuntary sigh that heaved her breast, the trembling of her heart in her voice.

"No," she repeated, "I have never doubted it. But you know yourself the malice of the world, and you see by the letter that was written to you that your action was observed."

"They will not write to me twice," the young man interrupted. "It was not only from that letter that I understood the world's malice and ferocity. What I perceived still more plainly a few moments ago," he added, with that melancholy firmness which holds back the tears of farewell, "was that my duty is clear now. My indiscretion the night before last, and others that I might commit, it is happily in my power to redeem, and I have come to tell you simply, madame, that I am going; going," he repeated. "I shall leave Cannes, and

if you permit me to hope that I may gain your esteem by doing this I shall leave, not happy, but less sad."

"You are going!" Ely repeated. "You wish to go?"

She looked the young man in the face. She saw that delicate physiognomy whose emotion touched her in a way she had never known before, and that fine mouth, still trembling from the words just spoken. The thought of being forever deprived of his presence suddenly became real to her with a vividness which was physically intolerable, and with this came the certainty of happiness if they should yield to the profound instinct that drew them toward each other. She abandoned her will to the force of her irresistible desire, and, feeling aloud, she said:—

"You shall not go, you cannot go. I am so lonely, so abandoned, so miserable. I have nothing genuine and true around me; nothing, nothing, nothing. And must I lose you?"

She rose with a passionate movement, which brought Hautefeuille also to his feet, and, approaching him, her eyes close to his, supernaturally beautiful with the light that illuminated her admirable face in the rush of her soul into her lips and eyes, she took his two hands in her hands, and, as though by this pressure and these words she would mingle her being with his, she cried:—

"No, you shall not leave me. We will not separate, That is not possible since you are in love with me, and I with you."

CHAPTER V

AFLOAT

Fifteen days had passed since Madame de Carlsberg, in spite of her promises, her resolutions, her remorse, had confessed her passion to Pierre Hautefeuille. The date fixed for the cruise of the *Jenny* had arrived, and he and she were standing side by side on the deck of the yacht, which was bearing also the Marquise Bonnacorsi toward her fantastic marriage, and her confidante, Miss Marsh, and pretty Madame de Chésy and her husband for the entertainment of the Commodore. That was the nickname given by his niece to the indefatigable Carlyle Marsh, who, in truth, scarcely ever left the bridge, where he stood directing the course of the boat with the skill of a professional sailor.

This Marionville potentate would have had no pleasure in a carriage unless he drove it, or in a yacht unless he steered it. He said himself, without boasting: —

"If I should be ruined to-morrow I know twenty ways of making a living. I am a mechanic, coachman, carpenter, pilot."

On this afternoon, while the *Jenny* sailed toward Genoa, he was at his post on the bridge, in his gold braided hat, glass in hand, his maps open before him, and he directed the course with an attention as complete and scrupulous as though he had been occupied all his life in giving orders to sailors. He had to a supreme degree that trait common to all great workers, — the capacity for giving himself always and wholly to the occupation of the moment. And to him the vast sea, so blue and soft, whose calm surface scarcely rippled, was but a racecourse upon which to exercise his love of contest, of struggle, the one pleasure of the Anglo-Saxon. Five hundred yards to the right, ahead of the *Jenny*, was a low, black yacht, with a narrower hull, steaming at full speed. It was the *Dalilah*, of Lord Herbert Bohun. Farther ahead, on the left, another yacht was sailing in the same direction. This one was white, like the *Jenny*, but with a wider beam. It was the *Albatross*, the favorite plaything of the Grand Dukes of Russia. The American had allowed these two yachts to leave Cannes some time before him, with the intention, quickly perceived by the others, of passing them, and immediately, as it were, a tacit wager was made by the Russian prince, the English lord, and the American millionaire, all three equally fanatical of sport, each as proud of his boat as a young man of his horses or his mistress.

To Dickie Marsh, as he stood with his glass in his

hand, giving orders to the men, the whole scene reduced itself to a triangle, whose corners were marked by the three yachts. He was literally blind to the admirable horizon that stretched before him; the violet Esterel, with the long, undulating line of its mountains, its dark ravines and jagged promontories, the port of Cannes and the mole, with the old town and the church rising behind it, all bathed in an atmosphere so transparent that one could distinguish every little window and its shutters, every tree behind the walls, the luxuriant hills of Grasse in the background, and along the bay the line of white villas set in their gardens; then the islands, like two oases of dark green, and suddenly the curve of another gulf, terminated by the solitary point of the Antibes. And the trees on this point, like those of the islands, bouquets of parasol pines, all bent in one direction, spoke of the eternal drama of this shore, the war of the mistral and the waves. But now the drama was suspended, giving place to the most intoxicating flood of light. Not a fleck of foam marred the immense sweep of liquid sapphire over which the *Jenny* advanced with a sonorous and fresh sound of divided water. Not one of those flaky clouds, which sailors call cattails, lined the radiant dome of the sky where the sun appeared to expand, dilate, rejoice in ether absolutely pure. It seemed as though this sky and sea and shore had conspired to fulfil the prophecy of the chiromancer,

Corancez, upon the passage of the boat that was bearing his clandestine *fiancée;* and Andryana Bonnacorsi recalled that prediction to Flossie Marsh as they leaned on the deck railing, clothed in similar costumes of blue and white flannel — the colors of the *Jenny's* awning — and talked while they watched the *Dalilah* drawing nearer and nearer.

"You remember in the Casino at Monte Carlo how he foretold this weather from our hands, exactly this and no other. Isn't it extraordinary, after all?"

"You see how wrong you were to be afraid," replied Miss Marsh; "if he saw clearly in one case, he must have done so in the others. We are going to have a fine night on sea, and by one o'clock to-morrow we shall head for Genoa."

"Don't be so confident," said the Italian, extending her hand with two fingers crossed to charm away the evil fates; "you will bring us bad luck."

"What! with this sky, this sea, this yacht, these lifeboats?"

"How should I know? But suppose Lord Herbert Bohun decides simply to follow us to the end and go with us to Genoa?"

"Follow us to the end on the *Dalilah* and we on the *Jenny?* I should like to see him try it!" said the American. "See how we gain on him. But be careful, Chésy and his wife are coming in this direction. Well, Yvonne," she said to the pretty little Vicomtesse,

blond and rosy in her dress of white serge, embroidered with the boat's colors, "you are not afraid to go so fast?"

"No," said Madame de Chésy, laughing; and, turning toward the bow, she drew in a long breath. "This air intoxicates me like champagne!"

"Do you see your brother, Marquise?" asked Chésy, pointing to one of the persons standing on the deck of the *Dalilah*. "He is beside the Prince. They must not feel very well satisfied. And his terriers, do you see his terriers running around like veritable rats? I am going to make them angry. Wait." And making a trumpet of his hands he shouted these words, whose irony he did not suspect:—

"Ay, Navagero; can we do anything for you at Genoa?"

"He doesn't understand, or pretends not to," said Madame de Chésy. "But here's something he will understand. The Prince is not looking, is he?" And boyishly she stretched her two hands from her nose with the most impertinent gesture that a pretty woman ever made to a company containing a royal highness. "Ah! the Prince saw me," she cried, with a wild laugh. "Bah! he's such a good fellow! And if he doesn't like it," and she softly tapped her eye with the ends of her fingers, "et voilà!"

When the frolicsome Parisienne began this piece of disrespectful childishness the two yachts had come

abreast of each other. For a quarter of an hour they went side by side, cutting through the water, propelled only by the force of their robust lungs of steel, vomiting from their chimneys two straight, black columns, which scarcely curved in the calm air; and behind them stretched a furrow of glaucous green over the blue water, like a long and moving path of emerald fringed with silver, and on it rolled and pitched a sailboat manned by two young men, sporting in the wake of the steamers.

On this wild race the deck was yet so motionless that the water did not tremble in the vases of Venetian glass placed on the table near a group of three women. The purple and saffron petals of the large roses slowly dropped upon the table. Beside the flowers, amid their perfume, Madame de Carlsberg was sitting. She had ungloved one of her beautiful hands to caress the bloom of the flowers, and she gazed, smiling and dreamily, from the *Dalilah* to the luminous horizon, from her fellow-voyagers out to the vast sea, and at Hautefeuille standing, with Chésy, beside her, and turning to her incessantly. The breeze of the boat's motion revealed the slender form of the young man under his coat of navy blue and trousers of white flannel, and softly fluttered the supple red stuff of Baroness Ely's blouse and her broad tie of black *mousseline de soie,* matched with the large white and black squares of her skirt. The young man

and the young woman both had in their eyes a feverish joy in living that harmonized with the radiance of the beautiful afternoon. How little his smile — the tender and ready smile of a lover who is loved — resembled the tired laughter that the jokes of Corancez had won from him two weeks before. And she, with the faint rose that tinged her cheeks, usually so pale, with her half-opened lips breathing in the healthful odor of the sea and the delicate perfume of the flowers, with her calm, clear brow — how little she resembled the Ely of the villa garden, defying, under the stars of the softest Southern night, the impassive beauty of nature. Seated near her loved one, how sweet nature now appeared — as sweet as the perfume of the roses that her fingers deflowered, as caressing as the soft breeze, as intoxicating as the free sky and water! How indulgent she felt for the little faults of her acquaintances, which she had condemned so bitterly the other night! For the eternal hesitations of Andryana Bonnacorsi, for the positivism of Florence Marsh, for the fast tone of Yvonne Chésy, she had now but a complacent half-smile. She forgot to be irritated at the naïve and comic importance which Chésy assumed on board the boat. In his blue yachting cap, his little body stiff and straight, he explained the reasons of the *Jenny's* superiority over the *Dalilah* and the *Albatross*, with the technical words he had caught from Marsh, and he gave the orders for tea: —

"Dickie is coming down as soom as we pass the other yacht," he said, and, turning to a sailor, "John, tell the *chef* to have everything ready in a quarter of an hour;" then addressing Madame de Carlsberg: "You are uncomfortable here, Baroness. I told Dickie that he should change his chairs. He is so careless at times. Do you notice these rugs? They are Bokharas — magnificent! He bought five at Cairo, and they would have rotted on the lower deck if I had not discovered them aud had them brought here from the horrible place where he left them. You remember? And these plants on deck — that is better, is it not? But has he taken too many cocktails this morning — See how close we are passing to the *Albatross!* Good evening, monseigneur."

And he saluted the Grand Duke — a kind of giant, with the broad, genial face of a moujik — who applauded the triumph of the *Jenny*, calling out in his strong voice: —

"Next year I'll build another that will beat you!"

"Do you know I was frightened," said Chésy to Marsh, who, according to his promise, had descended from the bridge; "we just grazed the *Albatross!*"

"I was very sure of the boat," Marsh continued; "but I should not have done it with Bohun. You saw how far I kept away from him. He would have cut our yacht in two. When the English see themselves about to be beaten, their pride makes them crazy, and they are capable of anything."

"That is just what they say of the Americans," gayly replied Yvonne de Chésy.

The pretty Parisienne was probably the only person in the world that the master of the *Jenny* would have permitted such a pleasantry. But Corancez had been right in what he said to Hautefeuille — when the malicious Vicomtesse was speaking Marsh could see his daughter. So he did not take offence at this epigram against his country, susceptible as he usually was to any denial that in everything America "beat the Old World."

"You are attacking my poor compatriots again," he said simply. "That is very ungrateful. All of them that I know are in love with you."

"Come, Commodore," replied the young woman; "don't try the madrigal. It is not your specialty. But lead us down to tea, which ought to be served, should it not, Gontran?"

"They are astonishing," Miss Marsh whispered, when her uncle and the Chésys had started toward the stairway that led to the salon. "They act as though they were at home."

"Don't be jealous," said Madame Bonnacorsi. "They will be so useful to us at Genoa in occupying the terrible uncle."

"If it were only she," Florence replied; "she is amusing and such a good girl. But he — I don't know if it is the blood of a daughter of the great Republic,

but I can't endure a nobleman who has a way of being insolent in the rôle of a parasite and domestic."

"Chésy is simply the husband of a very pretty woman," said Madame de Carlsberg. "Everything is permitted to those husbands on account of their wives, and they become spoilt children. You are going down? I shall remain on deck. Send us tea here, will you? I say us, for I shall keep you for company," she continued, turning to Hautefeuille. "I know Chésy. Now that the race is over he will proceed to act as the proprietor of the yacht. Happily, I shall protect you. Sit here."

And she motioned to a chair beside her own, with that tender and imperious grace by which a woman who loves, but is obliged to restrain herself before others, knows how to impart all the trembling passion of the caress she cannot give. Lovers like Pierre Hautefeuille obey these orders in an eager, almost religious, way which makes men smile, but not the women. They know so well that this devotion in the smallest things is the true sign of an inward idolatry. So neither Miss Marsh nor Madame Bonnacorsi thought of jesting at Hautefeuille's attitude. But while retiring, with that instinctive complicity with which the most virtuous women have for the romance of another, they said: —

"Corancez was indeed right. How he loves her!"

"Yes, he is happy to-day; but to-morrow?"

But to-morrow? He had no thought for the mysterious and dangerous morrow of all our peaceful to-days. The *Jenny*, free of her antagonists, continued with her rapid and cradling motion over this velvet sea. The *Dalilah* and the *Albatross* were already faint in the blue distance, where the coast also was disappearing. A few more strokes of the engines, a few more turns of the screw, and there would be nothing around them but the moving water, the motionless sky, and the sinking sun. The end of a beautiful winter day in Provence is really divine during that hour before the chill of evening has touched the air and darkened the sea and land. Now that the other guests of the yacht had gone down to the dining-room, it seemed as though the two lovers were all alone in the world on a floating terrace, amid the shrubbery and the perfume of flowers. One of the boat's servants, a kind of agile and silent genius, had placed the small tea-table beside them, with a complicated little apparatus of silver, on which, as well as on the cups and plates, was the fantastic coat of arms adopted by Marsh — the arch of a bridge over a swamp, "arch on Marsh" — this pun, in the same taste as that in which the boat had been baptized, was written under the scutcheon. The bridge was in or, the marsh in sable, on a field of gules. The American cared nothing for heraldic heresies. Black, red, and yellow were the colors of the deck awning, and this

scutcheon and device signified that his railroad, celebrated in fact for the boldness of its viaducts, had saved him from misery, here represented by the marsh. Naïve symbolism which would have typified even more justly the arch of dreams thrown by the two lovers over all the mire of life. Even the little tea-set, with its improvised coat of arms, added to this fleeting moment a charm of intimacy, the suggestion of a home where they two might have lived heart to heart in the uninterrupted happiness of each other's daily presence; and it was this impression that the young man voiced aloud after they had enjoyed their solitude for a few moments in silence.

"How delicious is this hour," he said, "more delicious than I had ever dreamed! Ah! if this boat belonged to us, and we could go thus on a long voyage, you and I, to Italy, which I would not see without you, to Greece, which gave you your beauty. How beautiful you are, and how I love you! *Dieu!* if this hour would never end!"

"Every hour has an end," answered Ely, half shutting her eyes, which had filled with ecstasy at the young man's impassioned words, and then, as though to repress a tremor of the heart that was almost painful in its tenderness, she said, with the grace and gayety of a young girl: "My old German governess used to say, as she pointed to the eagles of Sallach, 'You must be like the birds who are happy with

crumbs'; and it is true that we find only crumbs in life. — I have sworn," she went on, "that you, that we, will not fall into the 'terrible sorrow.'"

She emphasized the last two words, which were doubtless a tender repetition of a phrase often spoken between them, and which had become a part of their lovers' dialect. And playfully she turned to the table and filled the two cups, adding: —

"Let us drink our tea wisely, and be as *gemüthlich* as the good *bourgeois* of my country."

She handed one of the cups to Hautefeuille while she said this. As the young man took it, he touched with his fingers the small and supple hand that served him with the delight in humble indulgences so dear to women who are really in love. His simple caress caused them to exchange one of those looks in which two souls seem to touch, melt together, and absorb each other by the magnetism of their desire. They paused once more, rapt in the sense of their mutual fever so intoxicating to share amid that atmosphere, mixed with the scent of the sea and the perfume of the roses, with the languid palpitation of the immense waters sleeping around them in their silence. During the two weeks that had passed since the sudden avowal of Madame de Carlsberg they had repeated their vows of love, they had written passionate, wild letters, and had exchanged their souls in kisses, but they had not given themselves yet wholly to each other. As he

looked at her now on the deck of the yacht he trembled again from head to foot to see her smile with those lips, whose fresh and delicious warmth he still felt on his own. To see her so supple and so young, her body quivering with all the nervousness of a creature of fine race, recalled the passionate clasp with which he had enfolded her in the garden of her villa two days after the first vows. She had led him, under the pretext of a conversation, to a kind of belvedere, or rather cloister, a double row of marble columns, overlooking the sea and the islands. In the centre was a square space thick planted with gigantic camellias. The ground was all strewn with blossoms, buried in the large petals of red and rose and white fallen from the trees, and the red, rose, and white of other flowers gleamed above amid the sombre and lustrous foliage. It was there that he had for the second time held her close in his arms, and again still more closely in an obscure spot of the adorable villa of Ellenrock, at Antibes, where he had gone to wait for her. She had come to him, in her dress of mauve, along a path bordered with blue cineraria, violet heart's-ease, and great anemones. The neighboring roses filled the air with a perfume like that around them now, and sitting on the white heather, beneath the pines that descended to a little gray-rocked cove, he rested his head upon the heart of his dear companion.

All these memories — and others as vivid and troub-

ling — mingled with his present emotion and intensified it. The total unlikeness of Ely to all the women he had met served to quiet the young man's naïve remorse for his past experiences, and to make him forget the culpability of that sweet hour. Ely was married, she had given herself to one man, and had no right while he lived to give herself to a second. Although Pierre was no longer sufficiently religious to respect marriage as a sacrament, the imprint of his education and his memories of home were too deep, and above all he was too loyal not to feel a repugnance for the stains and miseries of adultery. But Ely had been careful to prevent him from meeting the Archduke after that terrible scene, and to the lover's imagination the Prince appeared only in the light of a despot and a tormentor. His wife was not his wife; she was his victim. And the young man's pity was too passionate not to overcome his scruples; all the more since he had, for the last two weeks, found his friend in an incessant revolt against an outrageous espionage — that of the sinister Baron von Laubach, the aide-de-camp with the face of a Judas. And this voluntary policeman must really have pursued Ely with a very odious surveillance for his memory to come to her at this moment when she wished to forget everything except this sky and sea, the swift boat, and the ecstatic lover who was speaking by her side.

"Do you remember," he was saying, "our uneasi-

ness three days ago, when the sea was so rough that we thought we could not start? We had the same idea of going up to La Croisette to see the storm. I could have thanked you on my knees when I met you with Miss Marsh."

"And then you thought that I was angry with you," she said, "because I passed with scarcely speaking to you. I had just caught a glimpse of that fox-like Iago von Laubach. Ah! what a relief to know that all on board are my friends, and incapable of perfidy! Marsh, his niece, Andryana, are honor itself. The little Chésys are light and frivolous, but there is not a trace of ill-nature about them. The presence of a traitor, even when he is not feared, is enough to spoil the most delightful moments. And this moment, ah! how I should suffer to have it spoiled!"

"How well I understand that!" he answered, with the quick and tender glance of a lover who is delighted to find his own ways of feeling in the woman he loves. "I am so much like you in that; the presence of a person whom I know to be despicable gives me a physical oppression of the heart. The other evening at your house, when I met that Navagero of whom Corancez had so often spoken, he poisoned my visit, although I had with me that dear, dear letter which you had written the night before." Then, dreamily following this train of thought, he continued: "It is strange that every one does not feel

the same about this. To some people, and excellent ones too, a proof of human infamy is almost a joy. I have a friend like that — Olivier du Prat, of whom I spoke to you and whom you knew at Rome. I have never seen him so gay as when he had proved some villainy. How he has made me suffer by that trait of his! And he was one of the most delicate of men, with the tenderest of hearts and finest of minds. Can you explain that?"

The name of Olivier du Prat, pronounced by that voice which had been moving Ely to the heart — what an answer to the wish sighed by the amorous woman that this divine moment should not be spoiled! These simple words were enough to dissipate her enchantment, and to interrupt her happiness with a pain so acute that she almost cried aloud. Alas! she was but at the very beginning of her love's romance, and already that which had been predicted by Louise Brion, her faithful and too lucid friend, had come true — she was shut in the strange and agonizing inferno of silence which must avoid, as the most terrible of dangers, the solace of confession. How many times already in like moments had a similar allusion evoked between her and Pierre the image of that other lover! Pierre had very soon alluded lightly and gayly to his friend, and as the Baroness had thought it best not to conceal the fact that she had met him in Rome, he continued to recall memories of Du Prat, without suspecting that

his words entered like a knife into the poor woman's heart. To see how much Hautefeuille loved Du Prat — with a friendship equal to that which the latter had for him — how could she help feeling anew the constant menace hanging over her? And then, as at the present, she was filled with an inexpressible anguish. It was as though all the blood in her veins had suddenly flowed out through some deep and invisible wound. At other times it was not even necessary that the redoubtable name should be mentioned in their conversation. It sufficed that the young man, in the course of the intimate talks which she encouraged as often as her social servitude permitted, should ingenuously express his opinion on some of the love-affairs reported by the gossips of the coast. She would then insist upon his talking in order to measure his uncompromising morality. She would have been pained if he had felt differently, for then he would not have been that noble and pure conscience unspotted by life; and she suffered because he did feel thus, and so unconsciously condemned her past. She made him open his mind to her, and always she found at the bottom this idea, natural to an innocent soul, that if love may be pardoned for everything, nothing should be pardoned to caprice, and that a woman of noble heart could not love a second time. When Hautefeuille would make some remark like this, which revealed his absolute and naïve faith in the singleness and uniqueness of true

love, inevitably, implacably, Olivier would reappear before the inward eye of the poor woman. Wherever they were, in the silent patio strewn with camellia leaves, under the murmuring pines of the Villa Ellenrock, on the field at La Napoule, where the golf players moved amid the freshest and softest of landscapes, all the marvellous scenery of the South would vanish, disappear — the palms and orange trees, the ravines, the blue sky and the luminous sea, and the man she loved. She would see nothing before her but the cruel eyes and evil smile of her old lover at Rome. In a sudden half hallucination she would hear him speaking to Pierre. Then all her happy forces would suddenly be arrested. Her eyelids would quiver, her mouth gasp for air, her features contract with pain, her breast shudder as though pierced by a knife; and, as at present, her tender and unconscious tormentor would ask, "What is the matter?" with an eager solicitude that at the same time tortured and consoled her; and she would answer, as now, with one of those little falsehoods for which true love cannot forgive itself. For hearts of a certain depth of feeling, complete and total sincerity is a need that is almost physical, like hunger and thirst. What an inoffensive deception it was! And yet Ely had once more a feeling of remorse at giving this explanation of her sudden distress: —

"It is a chill that has come over me. The night

comes so quickly in this country, with such a sudden fall of temperature."

And while the young man was helping to envelop her in her cloak, she said, in a tone that contrasted with the insignificance of her remark: —

"Look how the sea has changed with the sinking sun; how dark it has grown — almost black — and what a deep blue the sky is. It is as though all nature had suddenly been chilled. How beautiful it is yet, but a beauty in which you feel the approach of shadows."

And, indeed, by one of those atmospheric phenomena more general in the South than elsewhere, the radiant and almost scorching afternoon had suddenly ended, and the evening had come abruptly in the space of a few minutes. The *Jenny* moved on over a sea without a wave or a ripple. The masts, the yards, and the funnel threw long shadows across the water, and the sun, almost at the edge of the horizon, was no longer warm enough to dissipate the indistinct and chilly vapor that rose and rose, already wetting with its mist drops the brass and woodwork of the deck. And the blue of the still sea deepened into black, while the azure of the clear sky paled and waned. Then, as the disk of the sun touched the horizon abruptly, the immeasurable fire of the sunset burst from the sky over the sea. The coast had disappeared, so that the passengers of the yacht, now returned to the deck, had nothing before them but the water and the sky, two

formless immensities over which the light played in its fairy fantasies — here spread in a sheet of tender and transparent rose, like the petals of the eglantine; there rolling in purple waves, the color of bright blood; there stretching like a shore of emerald and amethyst, and farther, built into solid and colossal porticos of gold, and this light opened with the sky, palpitated with the sea, dilated through infinite space, and suddenly as the disk disappeared beneath the waves, this splendor vanished as it came, leaving the sea again a bluish black, and the sky, too, almost black, but with a bar of intense orange on its verge. This bright line vanished in its turn. The earliest stars began to come out, and the yacht lights to appear, illumining the dark mass which went on, bearing into the falling night the heart of a woman which had all day reflected the divine serenity of the bright hours, and which now responded to the melancholy of the rapid and fading twilight.

Although she was not at all superstitious, Ely could not help feeling, with a shudder, how this sudden invasion of the radiant day by the sadness of evening, resembled the darkening of her inward heaven by the evocation of her past. This analogy had given an added poignancy to her contemplation of the tragic sunset, the battle of the day's last fire with the shadows of night, and happily the magnificence of this spectacle had been so overwhelming that even her light com-

panions had felt its solemnity. No one had spoken during the few minutes of this enchantment in the west. Now, when the babble recommenced, she felt like fleeing from it — fleeing even from Hautefeuille, whose presence she feared. Moved as she was, she was afraid of breaking into tears beside him; tears that she would not be able to explain. When he approached her she said, "You must pay some attention to the others," and she began to pace the deck from end to end in company with Dickie Marsh. The American had the habit, while on board, of taking a certain amount of exercise measured exactly by the watch. He looked at the time, then paced over a measured distance until he had complied with his hygienic rules. "At Marionville," he would say, "it was very simple; the blocks are each exactly a half mile long. When you have walked eight of them, you know you have done four miles. And your constitutional is finished." Usually, when thus engaged in the noble duty of exercise, Marsh remained silent. It was the time when he invented those schemes that were destined to make him a billionaire. Ely, knowing of this peculiarity, counted upon not exchanging ten words while walking with the potentate of Marionville. She thought that the silent promenade would quiet her overwrought nerves. They had paced thus for perhaps ten minutes, when Dickie Marsh, who appeared more preoccupied than usual, suddenly asked: —

"Does Chésy sometimes speak to you of his affairs?"

"Sometimes," answered the young woman, "as he does to everybody. You know he has an idea that he is one of the shrewdest on the Bourse, and he is very glad to talk about it."

"Has he told you," Marsh continued, "that he is speculatiug in mining stocks?"

"Very likely. I do not listen to him."

"I heard him say so," the American said, "and just a moment ago, after tea, and I am still upset by it. And there are not many things that can worry me. At this moment," he continued, looking at Madame de Chésy, who was talking with Hautefeuille, "this charming Vicomtesse Yvonne is, beyond doubt, ruined; absolutely, radically ruined."

"That is impossible. Chésy is advised by Brion, who, I have heard, is one of the best financiers of the day."

"Pooh!" said Dickie Marsh, "he would be swallowed in one mouthful in Wall Street. As for the small affairs on this side of the water, he understands them well enough. But it is just because he understands them that his advice will ruin Chésy. It will not bore you to have me explain how and why I am sure that a crash is coming in that famous silver mine syndicate which you have at least heard of. All those who buy for a rise — whom we call the bulls — will be caught. Chésy has a fortune of $300,000. He

explained his position to me; he will lose $250,000. If it has not happened already, it will happen to-morrow."

"And you have told him all that?"

"What's the use?" the American replied. "It would only spoil his trip. And then it will be time enough at Genoa, where he can telegraph. But you, Baroness, will help me to do them a real service. You see that if Brion advises Chésy to join the bulls, it is because he himself is with the bears. That is our name for those who play for a decline. All this is legitimate. It is a battle. Each one for himself. All the financiers who give advice to men of society do the same, and they are right. Only Brion has still another reason: imagine Madame de Chésy with an income of ten thousand francs. — You understand."

"It is ignoble enough for him, that calculation," Ely said with disgust. "But how can I help you to prevent that scoundrel from proposing to the poor little woman to be his paid mistress, since that is certainly what you mean?"

"Exactly," replied the American. "I wish you would say to her, not this evening, or to-morrow, but when things have turned the way I know they will. 'You have need of some one to help you out of your embarrassment? Remember Dickie Marsh, of Marionville.' I would tell her myself. But she would think me like Brion, amorous of her, and offering money for that. These Frenchwomen are very clever, but

there is one thing they will never understand; that is that a man may not be thinking with them about the 'little crime,' as they call it themselves. That is the fault of the men of this country. All Europe is rotten to the core. If you speak to her, there will be a third person between her and me, and she will know very well that I have another reason."

He paused. He had so often explained to Madame de Carlsberg the resemblance between Yvonne de Chésy and his dead daughter, which moved him so strongly, that she was not deceived in regard to the secret reason of his strange interest and stranger proposition. There was in this business man, with all his colossal schemes, a touch of romanticism almost fantastic, and so singular that Ely did not doubt his sincerity, nor even wonder at it. The thought of seeing that pretty and charming face, sister to the one he had loved so much, soiled by the vile lust of a Brion, or some other *entreteneur* of impoverished women of society, filled this man with horror, and, like a genuine Yankee, he employed the most practical means of preventing this sacrilege. Neither was Ely surprised at the inconsistency of Marsh's conscience when the speculator found Brion's rascality in money affairs very natural, while the Anglo-Saxon was revolted at the mere thought of a love-affair. No, it was not astonishment that Madame de Carlsberg felt at this unexpected confidence. Troubled as she was by her own unhappiness,

she felt a new thrill of sadness. While she and Marsh paced from one end of the boat to the other during this conversation, she could hear Yvonne de Chésy laughing gayly with Hautefeuille. For this child, too, the day had been delicious, and yet misfortune was approaching her, from out of the bottomless gulf of destiny. This impression was so intense that, after leaving Marsh, Ely went instinctively to the young woman, and kissed her tenderly. And she, laughing, answered: —

"That is good of you. But you have been so good to me ever since you discovered me. It took you long enough."

"What do you mean?" asked the Baroness.

"That you did not at first suspect that there was a gallant little man hidden in your crazy Yvonne! Pierre's sister knows it well, and always has."

As the pretty and heedless young woman made this profession of faith, her clear eyes revealed a conscience so good in spite of her fast tone, that Ely felt her heart still more oppressed. The night had come, and the first bell for dinner had sounded. The three lights, white, green, and red, shone now like precious stones on the port, the starboard, and the foremast. Ely felt an arm pass under hers. It was Andryana Bonnacorsi who said: —

"It is too bad that we must go down to dress; it would be so pleasant to spend the whole night here."

"Would it not?" replied the Baroness, murmuring to herself, "She at least is happy." Then aloud: "It is the farewell dinner to your widowhood; you must look beautiful. But you seem to be worried."

"I am thinking of my brother," said the Italian woman, "aud the thought of him weighs upon me like remorse. And then, I think also of Corancez. He is a year younger than I. That is nothing to-day, but in ten years?"

"She too feels the menace of the future," thought Ely, a quarter of an hour later, while her maid was arranging her hair in the chamber of honor that had been given her next to that of the dead girl. "Marsh is disconsolate to see Chésy confronted by a terrible disaster. Andryana is preparing for marriage, haunted by remorse and fear. Florence is uncertain of ever being able to wed the man she loves. Aud Hautefeuille and I, with a phantom between us, which he does not see, but which I see so clearly, and which to-morrow, or the day after, in a week or two, will be a living man, who will see us, whom I shall see, and who will speak,—will speak to him."

A prey to this growing melancholy, the young woman took her seat at the dinner table, laden with the costly flowers that delight the ostentatious Americans. Incomparable orchids spread over the table a carpet of the softest hues. Other orchids were wreathed about the candles and the electric chandelier suspended from

the varnished ceiling; and amid this prodigality of fantastic corollas, gleamed a set of goldware of the time of Louis XIV. — the historical personage who was second only to Napoleon in the estimation of this Ohio democrat, who evinced, on this point, as on so many others, one of the most astonishing inconsistencies of his compatriots. And the bright tones of the wainscoting, the precision of the service, the delicacy of the food and wine, the brilliant toilets of the women, made this a setting for the consummation of refinement, with the sea visible through the open portholes, still motionless, and now touched by the rays of the crescent moon. Marsh had ordered the boat's speed to be slackened, so that the vibration of the screw was scarcely noticeable in the dining-room. The hour was really so exquisite, that the guests gradually yielded to the charm, the master of the boat first of all. He had placed Madame de Carlsberg in front of him, between Chésy and Hautefeuille, in order to have Madame de Chésy on his left, and in his tones and looks, as he talked to her, there was an amused and tender affection, a protecting indulgence, and an inexpressible depth of reverie. Resolved to save her from the danger which Chésy's confidences had suddenly revealed, it was as though he were going to do something more for the other, for the dead one whose image was sleeping in the rear room. He laughed at the follies of Yvonne, delicious in her pink dress, a

little excited by the dry champagne whose golden foam sparkled in the glass, — a gold the color of her hair, — and still more excited by the sense of pleasing — the most dangerous and the only intoxication that women thoroughly enjoy. Miss Marsh, all in blue, seated between her and Chésy, listened to his discourse upon hunting, the one subject on which this gentleman was well informed, with the profound attention of an American girl who is gathering new information. Andryana Bonnacorsi was silent, but cheered by the genial surroundings, her tender blue eyes, the color of the turquoise in her magnificent white corsage, smiled musingly. She forgot the dangerous character of her brother, and the future infidelity of her *fiancé*, to think of nothing but the caressing eyes, the voluptuous lips, and the alluring grace of the young man whose wife she would be in a few hours. Nor could the Baroness Ely resist the contagion that floated in this atmosphere. Once more the loved one was near her and all her own. In his youthful eyes she could see such respect and love, timidity and desire. He spoke to her in words that all could hear, but with a trembling in his voice which she alone could understand. She began by replying to him, then she also grew silent. A great wave of passion rose within her, drowning all other thoughts. Her fears of the future, her remorse for the past — all was forgotten in the presence of Pierre, whom she could see with his heart

beating, his breast agitated, alive and quivering beside her. How often he was thus to see her in memory, and pardon the fearful suffering she had caused him for the sake of her beauty at that moment! Ah! divine, divine beauty! Her eyes were drowned in languorous ecstasy. Her open lips breathed in the air as though half dying. The admirable curve of her neck rose with such grace above her low-cut dress of black, — a black that gave a richer gleam to the whiteness of her flower-soft skin; and in the simple folds of her hair, crowning her noble head, burned a single stone, a ruby, red and warm as a drop of blood.

How often he was to remember her thus, and as she appeared to him when later she leaned on the railing of the deck and watched the water that murmured, dashed, and sighed in the darkness, and the sky and the silent innumerable stars; and then looked at him and said: "I love you. Ah! how I love you." They had exchanged no promises. And yet, as surely as the sea and sky were there around them he knew that the hour had come, and that this night, this sky and sea, were the mystic and solemn witnesses of their secret betrothal! Nothing was audible in the calm night but the peaceful and monotonous respiration of the moving boat and the rhythmic splash of the sea — the caressing sea, their accomplice, who enchanted and rocked them in its gentle waves — while the tempest waited.

CHAPTER VI

IL MATRIMONIO SEGRETO

When the first pale rays of dawn broke upon the glass of the porthole, Pierre rose and went on deck. Dickie Marsh was there already, regarding the sky and the sea with the attentive scrutiny of an old sailor.

"For a Frenchman," he said to the young man, "you surprise me. I have seen a good many of your countrymen upon the *Jenny*. And yet you are the first that I have seen, so far, who rises at the most delicious hour of the day on sea.—Just breathe the breeze that comes from the open. You could work for ten hours without feeling tired, after taking a supply of such oxygen into your lungs.—The sky makes me a little uneasy," he added. "We have gone too far out of our course. We cannot reach Genoa before eight o'clock and the *Jenny* may receive a good tossing before that time.—I never had any sympathy for those yachtsmen who invite their friends to enjoy the hospitality of a stateroom in company with a slop-pail!—We could have gone from Cannes to Genoa in four hours, but I thought it better to let you sleep

away from the tumult of the port.—The barometer was very high! I have never seen it descend so quickly."

The dome of the heavens, so clear all the preceding day and night, had indeed, little by little, been obscured by big, gray, rock-like clouds. Others were spread along the line of the horizon like changing lines fleeing from each other. Pale rays of sunlight struggled to pierce this curtain of gray vapor. The sea was still all around them, but no longer motionless and glossy. The water was leadlike in hue, opaque, heavy, menacing. The breeze freshened rapidly, and soon a strong gust of wind swept over the sullen sheet of the water. It caused a trembling to run along the surface, as though it shuddered. Then thousands of ripples showed themselves, becoming larger and larger, until they swelled into countless short, choppy waves, curling over and tossing their white crests in the air.

"Are you a good sailor?" Marsh asked Hautefeuille. "However, it does not matter. I was mistaken in my calculations. The *Jenny* will not get much tossing about, after all.—We're going before the wind and will soon be under the shelter of the coast. Look! There is the Porto-Fino lighthouse. As soon as we have rounded the cape, we shall be out of danger."

The sea, by this time, was completely covered with a scattered mass of bubbling foam through which the yacht ploughed her way easily without rolling much,

although she listed alternately to the right and then to the left like a strong swimmer accommodating his stroke to the waves. Close to a ruined convent, some distance ahead, a rocky point projected, bearing a dazzlingly white lighthouse at its extremity. The promontory was covered, as with a fleece, with a thick growth of silvery olive trees, between which could be seen numerous painted villas, while its rocky base was a network of tiny creeks. This was Cape Porto-Fino, a place rendered famous by the captivity there of Francis I. after Pavia. The yacht rounded it so closely that Hautefeuille could hear the roar of the waves breaking upon the rocks. Beyond the promontory again stretched the sullen sheet of water with the long line of the Ligurian coast, which descends from Chiappa and Camogli as far as Genoa by way of Recco, Nervi, and Quinto. Height ascending after height could be seen, the hills forming the advance guard of the Apennines, their valleys planted with figs and chestnuts, their villages of brightly painted cottages, dotting the scene, and with, in the foreground, the narrow strip of sandy soil that serves as seashore. The landscape, at once savage and smiling, impressed the business man and the lover in different ways, for the former said with disdain: —

"They have not been able to make a double track railway along their coast! — I suppose the task is too big for these people. — Why, my line from Marion-

ville to Duluth has four tracks — and we had to make tunnels of a different sort from these!"

"But even one line is too much here," replied Hautefeuille, pointing to a locomotive that was slowly skirting the shore, casting out a thick volume of smoke. "What is the good of modern inventions in an old country? — How can one dream of an existence of struggles amid such scenery?" he continued, as though thinking aloud. "How is it possible to contemplate the stern necessities of life upon this Riviera, or upon the other? — Provence and Italy are oases in your desert of workshops and manufactories. Have a little respect for them. Let there be at least a corner of the world left for lovers and poets, for those who yearn for a life of peace and happiness, for those who dream of a solitude shared only by some beloved companion and surrounded by the loveliness of nature and of art. — Ah! how sweet and peaceful this morning is!"

This state of enraptured exaltation, which made the happy lover reply with dreamy poetical reflections to the American's practical remarks, without noticing the comical character of the contrast, lasted all through the day. It even increased as time passed. The *Jenny's* passengers came up on deck one by one. And then Madame de Carlsberg appeared, pale and languid. In her eyes was the look of tender anxiety that gives such a touching aspect to the expression of a loving

woman on the morrow of her first complete surrender. And what a happy revulsion, what rejoicing, when she sees, as Ely de Carlsberg did in her first glance, that the soul of her beloved vibrates in sympathy with her own, that he is as sensitive, as tender, as loving as before! This similarity of nature was so sweet, so deep, so penetrating, for the charming woman, that she could have gone down upon her knees before Pierre. She adored him at this moment for being so closely the image of what she desired him to be. And she felt compelled to speak of it, when they were seated side by side, as upon the night before, watching the gulf growing into life before them, with Genoa the Superb surging from the waves.

"Are you like me? — Were you afraid and yet longing to see me again, just as I longed to see you and yet was afraid? Were you also afraid of being soon called upon to suffer for so much happiness? Did you feel as though a catastrophe were close at hand? — When I awoke and saw stretching before me the leaden sea and clouded sky, a shudder of dread ran through me like a presentiment. — I thought all was over, that you were no longer my Prince Beau-Temps" — this was a loving title she had conferred upon Pierre, alleging that the sky had cleared each time she had met him. "How exquisite it is," she continued caressingly, with the irresistible fascination of a loving woman, "to have trembled with apprehension and then

to find you just as you were when I left you last night —no, not last night, this morning!"

At the remembrance of the fact that they had parted only so short a time before, she smiled. Her face lit up with an expression in which languor was mingled with such archness, grace with such voluptuous charm, that the young man, at the risk of being seen by the Chésys or Dickie Marsh, printed a kiss upon the hem of the loose Scotch cloak that enveloped her, its long hood streaming behind in the wind. Happily the American and his two guests had eyes for nothing but the beautiful city growing nearer and nearer and more distinct. It towered aloft now, girdled by its encircling mountains. Beyond the two ports, with their forests of masts and spars, could be seen the countless houses of the town, of all shapes and heights, pressed closely one upon the other. Tiny, narrow streets, almost lanes, wound upward, cutting through the mass of dwellings at right angles. The colors of the houses, once bright and gay, were faded and washed out by sun and rain. And yet it seemed still a city of wealth and caprice, with the terraces of its palaces outlined and covered with rare plants and statues. The apparently endless line of scattered villas stretching along the coast were here clustered in groups like little hamlets, forming suburbs outside the suburbs, and further on stood isolated in the luxuriant verdure of gardens and shrubbery. With the simple aid of a field-glass Marsh

recognized everything, palaces, villas, suburbs, one after the other.

"There is San Pier d'Arena," he said, handing the glass to Yvonne and her husband, "and there are Cornegliano and Sestri to the left. To the right you can see San Francesco d'Albaro, Quarto, Quinto, San Mario Ligure, the Villa Gropallo, the Villa Croce."

"Why, Commodore, there is another trade you can turn to the day your pockets are empty," said Madame de Chésy, laughingly. "You can become cicerone."

"Oh," said Marsh, "it is the easiest thing in the world. When I see a place that I cannot recognize or that I do not know, I feel as though I were blind."

"Ah! You are not like me," cried Chésy. "I never could understand a map, and yet that has not prevented me getting a lot of amusement out of my travels.— Believe me, my dear fellow, we are right not to trouble about such things; we have sailors on sea and coachmen on land to attend to them!"

While this conversation was going on at the bow, Florence Marsh was aft trying to instil a little courage into Andryana Bonnacorsi. The future Vicomtesse de Corancez would not even glance at the town, but remained with her eyes looking fixedly at the vessel's wake.

"I feel convinced," she said with a sigh, "that Genoa will be fatal to me; 'Genova prende e non rende,' as we Italians say."

"It will take your name, Bonnacorsi, and will not return it, that is all," replied Florence, "and the proverb will be verified! — We have a proverb, too, in the United States, one that Lincoln used to quote. You ought to take note of it, for it will put an end to all your fears. It is not very, very pretty, particularly to apply to a marriage, but it is very expressive. It is, 'Don't trouble how to cross a mud creek before you get to it.'"

"But suppose Lord Bohun has changed his mind and the *Dalilah* is in the port with my brother on board? Suppose the Chésys want to come with us? Suppose Prince Fregoso at the last minute refuses to lend us his chapel?"

"And suppose Corancez says, 'I will not' at the altar?" interrupted Florence. "Suppose an earthquake engulfs the lot of us? — Don't be uneasy, the *Dalilah* is riding at anchor in the roadstead at Calvi or Bastia. The Chésys and my uncle have five or six English and American yachts to visit, and it is madness to think that they will sacrifice this arrangement for the sake of going with us to museums and churches. Since the old prince has consented to lend his place to Don Fortunato it is not likely that he has changed his mind — particularly as he and the abbé were companions in prison in 1859. Between Italians anything concerning the *Risorgimento* is sacred. You know that better than I do. I have only one fear," she added with a gay

laugh, "and that is that this Fregoso may have sold some of his finest paintings and his most beautiful statuary to one of my countrymen. Those pirates loot everything, under the plea that they have not only the money but also good taste, and that they are connoisseurs. Would you believe it, when I was at college in Marionville, the professor of archæology taught us the history of Grecian art anterior to Phidias with the aid of photographs of specimens in the collection belonging to this very Fregoso?"

"Well, what did I tell you?" Florence Marsh again asked her friend, a couple of hours later. "Was I right? Have you come to the mud creek?"

The passengers had landed, just as had been prearranged. The Chésys and Dickie Marsh had gone off to visit the fleet of pleasure yachts moored near the pier. The Marchesa had received a telegram from Navagero announcing the arrival of the *Dalilah* in Corsican waters. And now a hired landau was bearing the tender-hearted woman, in company with Florence, Madame de Carlsberg, and Pierre Hautefeuille, toward the Genoese palace, where Corancez was awaiting them. The carriage climbed up the narrow streets, passing the painted façades of the old marble houses whose columns, all over the city, testify to the pretentious opulence of the old half-noble, half-piratical merchants. All along the route the streets, or rather the corridors, that descended to the port swarmed with a chattering, active, gesticulat-

ing people. Although the north wind was now blowing keenly, the three women had insisted upon the carriage being left open, so that they could see the crowd, the crumbling, splendid façades, and the picturesque costumes. The Marchesa smiled, still agitated, but now happy, in reply to Miss Marsh's words of encouragement, as she said: —

"Yes, you were right. I am not afraid now, and begin to think that I am awake and not dreaming. — Yet, if any one had told me that some day I should go with you three along the Piazza delle Fontane Morose to do what I am going to do. — Ah! *Jésus Dieu!* there is Corancez! — How imprudent he is!"

It was, indeed, the Provençal. He was standing at the corner of the famous square and the ancient via Nuova, now the via Garibaldi, the street which Galéas Alessi, Michael Angelo's pupil, glorified with the palaces of Cambiaso, Serra, Spinola, Doria, Brignole-Sale, and Fregoso, masterpieces of imposing architecture that, by themselves, are sufficient justification for the title of Superb, given to Genoa by its arrogant citizens.

It was certainly ill-advised to venture into the streets, risking a meeting with some French acquaintance. But Corancez had not been able to resist the temptation. He was playing for such high stakes that for once his nervousness had overmastered the natural prudence of the Provençal, ordinarily patient and circumspect, one of those people for whom the Genoese would seem to have

invented this maxim: "He who is patient will buy thrushes for a liard each."

By means of a messenger he had been informed of the arrival of the *Jenny*. He had then left the safe shelter of the palace so as to be sure that his *fiancée* had arrived. When he saw the beautiful golden hair of Madame Bonnacorsi, a wave of hot blood seemed to course through his veins. He jumped upon the carriage-step gayly, boyishly even, without waiting for the carriage to stop. Without any more delay than was required to kiss his betrothed's hand, to utter a word of welcome to Madame de Carlsberg and Florence, and to greet Hautefeuille gratefully, he began to tell of his two weeks' exile with his usual gayety.

"Don Fortunato and I are already a couple of excellent friends," he said. "Wait till you see what a comical little fellow he is with his knee-breeches and big hat. You know him, Marchesa, so you can imagine. I am already his *figlio mio!*—As for you, Andryana, he worships you. He has written, specially for you, an epithalamium in fifty-eight cantos!—And yet this religious marriage without the civil ceremony disquiets him.—What would Count Camillo Cavour, whose walking-stick and portrait he piously cherishes, have said of it? Between Cavour and the Marchesa, the Marchesa and Cavour, he has been hard pushed to make a choice. However, he has thrown in his lot with the Marchesa, a decision that I understand very easily. All

the same, he is now afraid to even glance at the portrait and the stick, and will not dare to do so until we have complied with all the requirements of the Italian law. — I vowed to him that there would only be a delay of a few days, and then Prince Pierre reassured him. — That is another character. — You will have to visit the museum and see his favorites there. — But, here we are!"

The landau stopped before the imposing door of a palace, having, like its neighbors, a marble peristyle, and brilliantly painted, like the other houses. The balustrade of the balcony upon the first floor bore a huge carved escutcheon, displaying the three stars of the Fregosi, an emblem that was once dreaded all over the Mediterranean when the vessels of the Republic swept the seas of the Pisans, the Venetians, the Catalans, Turks, and French.

The new arrivals were received by a *concierge* wearing the livery, very much soiled, of the Fregosi, the buttons stamped with armorial bearings. He carried a colossal silver pommelled cane in his hand, and led the visitors into a vaulted vestibule at the foot of a huge staircase.

Beyond they could see an enclosed garden, planted with orange trees. Ripe fruit glowed among the sombre foliage, through which glimpses could be obtained of an artificial grotto peopled with gigantic statuary. Several sarcophagi embellished the entrance, characterized by

that air of magnificence and decay common to old Italian mansions. How many generations had mounted that worn staircase since the gifted genius designed the white moulding upon a yellow background that decorated the ceiling! How many visitors had arrived here from the distant colonies with which the great Republic traded! And yet probably no more singular spectacle had been seen for three centuries, than that presented by the noble Venetian lady arriving from Cannes upon the yacht of an American, for the purpose of marrying a ruined would-be gentleman from Barbentane, and accompanied by a young American girl, and the morganatic wife of an Austrian archduke with her lover, one of the most artless, most provincial Frenchmen of the best school of French chivalry.

"You must admit that my wedding *cortège* is anything but commonplace," said Corancez to Hautefeuille, glancing at the three women behind whom he and his friend were standing.

They had not met since the morning they had visited the *Jenny* at Cannes. The acute Southerner, the moment of his arrival, had felt that there was a vague embarrassment in Pierre's greeting and in his expression. Upon the boat, the young lover's happiness had not been in the least troubled by the presence of Miss Marsh and of the Marchesa, although he knew they could not be ignorant of his sentiments. But he also knew that they would respect his feelings. With Co-

rancez it was different. A mere glance of Corancez's disturbed him. "All is over," the Provençal had evidently thought. And, with his easy-going instincts of loose morality, Corancez was all the happier for his friend's happiness; he rejoiced in his friend's joy. He therefore bent all his energies upon the task of dispelling Hautefeuille's slight uneasiness, which he had discovered with his infallible tact.

"Yes," he went on in a conciliatory tone, "this staircase is a little more *chic* than the staircase of some vile *mairie.*—And it is also delightful to have such a friend as you for my witness! I don't know what life may hold in store for us, and I am not going to make a lot of protestations, but, remember, you can ask me anything, after this proof of your friendship.—There must have been a host of things that were disagreeable to you in this expedition. Don't deny it. I know you so well!—And yet you have faced them all for the sake of your old friend, who is not, for all that, Olivier du Prat.—Isn't my *fiancée* gloriously beautiful this morning?" he continued. "But, hush! here comes the old Prince in person, and Don Fortunato.—Watch closely, and listen; you'll find it worth your while!"

Two old gentlemen were just issuing from the entrance of a high windowed hall, at the top of the staircase. They might have stepped out of one of the pictures in which Longhi has fixed so accurately, and

so unpretentiously, the picturesque humor of ancient Italy. One was the Abbé Lagumina, very thin, very little; with his shrivelled legs, no thicker than skeleton's, buried in knee-breeches, and stockings that came above his knees. His bowed body was wrapped in a long ecclesiastical frock-coat. He rubbed his hands together unceasingly and timidly, bowing all the time. And yet his physiognomy was so acute, so stamped with intelligence, that the ugliness of his huge nose and his toothless gums was forgotten and only the charm of his expression remained.

The other was Prince Paul Fregoso, the most celebrated descendant of that illustrious line, whose doughty deeds are inscribed in the golden book of Genoa's foreign wars, and, alas! in the book of brass devoted to her civil conflicts. The Prince owed his Christian name, Paul, an hereditary one in the family, to the legendary souvenirs of the famous Cardinal Fregoso, who was driven from the city, and ruled the seas for a long time as pirate.

This grandnephew of the curious hero was a veritable giant. His features were massive, and his eyes intensely bright. His feet and hands were distorted by gout. In spite of his faded, sordid costume, in spite of the fact that he was almost bent in two and leaned upon his stick, of which the point was protected from slipping by an india-rubber shield, Prince Paul looked every inch a descendant of the doges by his haughty

mien. He spoke with a deep, voluminous, cavernous voice, that indicated great vigor even at his advanced time of life, for he was about seventy-nine years of age.

"Ladies," he said, "I beg you to excuse me for not having descended this diabolical staircase in order to greet you as I ought to have done. Please do not believe the epigram that our Tuscan enemies have made about us: 'At Genoa there are no birds in the air, the sea has no fish, the mountains are woodless, and the men without politeness.' — You see my birds," and he pointed through the window to the gulls that soared above the port in search of food. "I hope, if you do me the honor of lunching with me, that you will find my mullets are as good as those you get at Leghorn. — And, with your permission, we will go at once into another salon, where there is a fireplace. In that fireplace you will see plenty of wood that comes from my estates outside the Roman gate. With such a north wind we need plenty of warmth in these big halls, which in our fathers' time required only a scaldino. — The first greeting is that due to the health of our guests! Madame la baronne! Madame la marquise! Miss Marsh!" — And he bowed to each of the three ladies, although he did not know either of them, with an indescribable air of easy grace and ceremonious courtesy. — "The abbé will lead the way. — I can only follow you like an unfortunate *gancio di mare* — the deformed, miserable creature you call a

crab," he added, addressing Corancez and Hautefeuille. He made them go on before him, and then dragged himself along in their wake with his poor, feeble steps, to a rather smaller salon.

Here a meagre wood fire smouldered, making much smoke in a badly constructed chimney. The floor was formed of a mosaic of precious marbles, and the ceiling decorated with colored stuccoes and frescoes, representing the arrival of Ganymede at the feast of the gods. It was painted lightly and harmoniously with colors whose brilliancy seemed quite fresh. The graceful figures, the exquisite fancifulness of landscape and architecture, all the pagan charm, in fact, in its very delicacy, spoke of some pupil of Raphael. Below the moulding were hung several portraits. The aristocratic touch of Van Dyck was apparent at the first glance. Beneath the huge canvases antique statues were grouped on the floor, and stools that had once been gilded, shaped like the letter X, and without backs, gave the air of a museum to the salon. The three women could not restrain their admiration.

"How beautiful it is! What treasures!" they cried.

"Look at the Prince," said Corancez, in a whisper to Pierre. "Do you see how disgusted he is? You have got a front seat for a comedy that I can guarantee as amusing. I am going to pay a little attention to my *fiancée*. Don't lose a word; you will find it worth attention."

"You think this is beautiful?" said the Prince to the Baroness and Miss Marsh, who stood beside him, while Corancez and Madame Bonnacorsi chatted in a corner. "Well, the ceiling is not too bad in its way. Giovanni da Udine painted it. The Fregoso of that time was jealous of the Perino del Vagas of the Doria Palace. That particular head of the house was my namesake, Cardinal Paolo, the one you know who was a pirate — before he was a cardinal. He summoned another of Raphael's pupils, the one who had aided the master at the Vatican. — Each of those gods has a history. That Bacchus is the cardinal himself, and that Apollo, whose only garment is his lute, was the cardinal's coadjutor! — Don't be shocked, Don Fortunato. — Ah, I see, he has gone off to prepare for the marriage sacrament; *mene malo.* — The Van Dycks, also, are not bad as Van Dycks. — They too have their history. Look at that beautiful woman, with her impenetrable, mysterious smile. — The one holding a scarlet carnation against her green robe. — And then look at that young man, with the same smile, his pourpoint made of the same green material, with the same carnation. — They were lovers, and had their portraits painted in the same costume. The young man was a Fregoso, the lady an Alfani, Donna Maria Alfani. — All this was going on during the absence of the husband, who was a prisoner among the Algerians. They both thought he would never return. — 'Chi non muore, si revede,' the

cardinal used to like to say, 'He who is not dead always returns.' — The husband came back and slew them both. — These portraits were hidden by the family. But I found them and hung them there."

The two immense pictures, preserved in all their brilliancy by a long exile from the light, smiled down upon the visitors with that enigmatical smile of which the old collector had spoken. A voluptuous, culpable grace shone out of the eyes of Donna Maria Alfani, lingered upon her crimson lips, her pale cheeks, and her dark hair. The delicate visage, so mobile, so subtle, preserved a dangerous, fascinating attraction even up there in the stiff outlines of the lofty green frieze. The passionate pride of a daring lover sparkled in the black eyes of the young man. The perfect similarity in the colors of their costumes, in the hue of the carnations they held in their hands, in the pose of the figures, and in the style of the paintings seemed to prolong their criminal *liaison* even after death. It seemed like a challenge to the avenger. He had killed them, but not separated them, for they were there, upon the same panel of the same wall, proclaiming aloud their undying devotion, glorified by art's magic, looking at each other, speaking to each other, loving each other.

Ely and Pierre could not resist the temptation to exchange a glance, to look at each other with the tenderness evoked by the meeting of two lovers with

the relics of a passion long since passed away. In it could be read how keenly they felt the evanescent nature of their present happiness in the face of this vanished past. Ely was moved more deeply still. The cardinal-pirate's threatening adage, "Chi non muore, si revede," had made her shudder again, had thrilled her with the same terror she had felt upon the boat at the sweetest moment of that heavenly hour. But this terror and melancholy were quickly dissipated like an evil dream when Miss Marsh replied to the commentaries of the Genoese prince:—

"My uncle would pay a big price for those two portraits. You know how fond he is of returning from his visits to the Old World laden with knick-knacks of this kind! He calls them his scalps.—But Your Highness values them very highly, I suppose? They are such beautiful works of art!"

"I value them because they descend to me as heirlooms from my family," replied Fregoso. "But don't profane in that way the great name of Art," he added solemnly. "This and that," he continued, pointing to the vaulted dome and to the picture, "can be called anything you like, brilliant decoration, interesting history, curious illustrated legend, the reproduction of customs of a past age, instructive psychology.—But it is not Art.—There has never been any art except in Greece, and once in modern times, in the works of Dante Alighieri. Never forget that, Miss Marsh."

"Then you prefer these statues to the pictures?" asked Madame de Carlsberg, amused by the tone of his sally.

"These statues?" he replied. He looked around at the white figures ranged along the walls, and the grand lines of his visage took on an expression of extreme contempt. "Those who bought these things did not even know what Greek art was. They knew about as little as the ignoramuses who collected the mediocrities of the Tribune or of the Vatican."

"What?" interrupted Madame de Carlsberg. "The Venus de' Medici is at the Tribune and the Apollo and the Ariadne at the Vatican!"

"The Venus de' Medici!" cried Fregoso, angrily, "don't speak to me about the Venus de' Medici! — Look," he went on, pointing to one of the statues with his gouty fingers, "do you recognize it? That is your Venus! — It has the same slender, affected body, the same pose of the arms, the same little cupid at her feet, astride a playful dolphin, and, like the other, it is a base copy made from Praxiteles's masterpiece in the taste of the Roman epoch which brought it into existence. — Would you have in your house one of those reproductions of 'Night' which encumber the shops of the Tuscan statuary dealers? — Copies, I tell you; they are all copies, and made in such a way! — That is the sort of art you admire in Florence, Rome, Naples. — All those emperors and Roman patricians who stocked

their villas with the reproductions of Greek *chefs d'œuvre* were barbarians, and they have left to us the shadow of a shadow, a parody of the real Greece, the true, the original, the Greece that Pausanias visited! — Why, that Venus is a pretty woman bathing, who takes flight to arouse desire! She is a coquette, she is lascivious! — What has she in common with the Anadyomene, with the Aphrodite who was the incarnation of all the world's passionate energies, and whose temple was forbidden to men, with the goddess that was also called the Apostrophia, the Preserver? — Think of asking this one to resist desire, to tear Love from the dominion of the senses! — And look at this Dromio of your Apollo. — Does it not resemble in a confusing way the Belvedere that Winckelmann admired so much? — It is another Roman copy of a statue by Scopas. But what connection is there between this academic gladiator and the terrible god of the Iliad, such as he is still figured on the pediment at Olympia? — The origiual was the personification of terrible, mutilating, tragical light. You feel the influence of the East and of Egypt, the irresistible power of the Sun, the torrid breath of the desert. — But here? — It is simply a handsome young man destined to lighten the time of a depraved woman in a secluded chamber, a *venereo*, such as you can find by the hundred in the houses at Pompeii. — There is not an original touch about these statues; nothing that

reveals the hand of the artist, that discloses the eye guiding the hand, the soul guiding the eye, and guiding the soul, the city, the race, all those virtues that make Art a sacred, magisterial thing, that make it the divine blossom of human life!"

The old man spoke with singular exaltation of spirit. His faded visage was transfigured by a noble, intellectual passion. Suddenly the comical and familiar side of the man came uppermost again. His long lips protruded in a ludicrous pout and, threateningly shaking his knotted finger at one of the statues, a Diana with a quiver, whose countenance, white in some parts and yellow in others, disclosed the fact that it had been restored, he added: —

"And the hussies are not even intact! — They are only patched-up copies. — Just look at this one. — Ah, you baggage, you should not keep that nose if it were not too much trouble to knock it off! — Ah!" he continued, as a servant opened the double door at the end of the gallery, "a thoroughbred needs no spur — Don Fortunato is ready."

Approaching Andryana Bonnacorsi, he said: —

"Will Madame la marchesa do me the honor of accepting my arm to lead her to the altar? My age gives me the right to play the rôle of father. And if I cannot walk quickly enough you must excuse me; the weight of years is the heaviest man ever has to carry. — And don't be alarmed," added the good old man in a

whisper, as he felt the arm of his companion tremble. "I have studied your Corancez very deeply for several days. He is an excellent and good fellow."

"Well," said Corancez to Madame de Carlsberg, offering her his arm, while Florence Marsh took Hautefeuille's, "are you still as sceptical as you were about chiromancy and the line of fate? Is it simply a chance that I should have the Baroness Ely leaning on my arm in my wedding procession? And is it merely hazard that has provided me with an original like our host to amuse you during the wearisome affair?"

"It is not wearisome," replied the Baroness, laughing. "All the same, you are lucky in marrying Andryana; she is looking so beautiful to-day, and she loves you so much! — As to the Prince, you are right; he is unique. It is pleasant to find such enthusiasm in a man of his age. — When Italians are taken up with an idea they are infatuated with it passionately, devotedly, as they are with a woman. — They have rebuilt their country with the help of that very quality."

During these few minutes Miss Marsh was talking to Hautefeuille.

"You cannot understand that feeling," she was saying, "for you belong to an old country. But I come from a town that is very little older than myself, and it is an ecstasy to visit a palace like this where everything is eloquent of a long past."

"Alas, Miss Marsh," replied Hautefeuille, "if there is anything more painful than living in a new country, it is living in one that wants to become new at any price when it is filled to overflowing with relics of the past, of a glorious past,—a country where every one is making desperate efforts to destroy everything.—France has had that mania for about a hundred years."

"Yes, and Italy has had it for twenty-five years," said the American girl. "But we are here," she added gayly, "to buy everything and to preserve it.—Oh! what an exquisite chapel.—Just look at it!—Now I'll bet you that those frescoes will finish their existence in Chicago or Marionville."

As she spoke she pointed out to Pierre the mural paintings that decorated the chapel they entered at the moment. The little place where the cardinal-pirate had doubtless often officiated was embellished with a vast symbolical composition from floor to ceiling. It was the work of one of those unknown masters whose creations confront one at every step in Italy and which anywhere else would be celebrated. But there, as the soldiers in the famous charge say, they are too numerous! This particular painter, influenced by the marvellous frescoes with which Lorenzo Lotto had beautified the Suardi Chapel at Bergamo, had represented, above the altar, Christ standing up and holding out His hands. From the Saviour's finger-tips a vine shoot spread

out, climbing up and up to the dome, covered with grapes. The tendrils wound round, making frames for the figures of five saints on one side, and on the other five female figures. Above the head of Christ the inscription, "Ego sum vitis, vos palmites," gave an evangelical significance to the fantastic decoration.

The principal episodes in the legend of St. Laurence, the patron saint of the cathedral at Genoa, were painted on the walls and in the panels made by the pillars. These were: Decius slaying the Emperor Philip in his tent; the young son of the dead Emperor confiding his father's treasures to Sixtus to be distributed among the poor; Sixtus being led to the scene of his martyrdom, followed by Laurence, crying, "Where art thou going, O father, without thy son? Where art thou going, O priest, without thy deacon?" Laurence receiving the treasures in his turn and confiding them to the poor widow; Laurence in prison converting the officer of the guard; Laurence in Sallust's gardens collecting together the poor, the halt, and the blind, saying at the same time to Decius, "Behold the treasures of the Church!" Laurence surrounded by flames upon a bed of fire!—The picturesqueness of the costumes, the fancy displayed in the architecture, the fruitful nature of the landscape, the breadth of the drawing, and the warmth of the coloring revealed the influence of the Venetian school, although attenuated and softened by the usury of time, which had

effaced the too glaring brilliancy and toned down the too vivid warmth of the painting. It had taken on something of the faded tone of old tapestry.

The whole gave to the marriage that was being celebrated in the old oratory of the ancient palace of an aged prince by a Gallophobe priest a fantastic character that was both delightful and droll. The ultra-modern Corancez kneeling with the descendants of the doges with Don Fortunato to bless them, in a setting of the sixteenth century, was one of those paradoxes that only nature dare present, so pronounced are they as to be almost incredible! And equally incredible was the simple-mindedness of the abbé, the impassioned worshipper of Count Camillo. He rolled out a little oration to the young *fiancés* before uniting them. This oration was in French, a condescension he had determined upon making, in spite of his political hatreds, for the sake of the foreigner to whom he was to marry his dear marchesa.

"Noble lady! Honored sir! I do not intend to say much. — Tongueless birds furnish no auguries. — Sir, you are going to marry this dear lady in the presence of God. In thus consecrating the union of a great Venetian name with that of a noble French family, it seems as though I were asking once more for the blessing of Him Who can do all things, that I were appealing to Him to consecrate the friendship between two countries which ought to be only one in heart; I

mean, my lady, our dear Italy, and your beautiful France, my lord! — Italy resembles that figure painted by a master, a genius, upon the wall of this chapel. It is from her that proud Spain and brilliant France, two young branches of the Latin race, have sprung as from a fruitful vine. The same vigorous sap courses through the veins of the three nations. May they be reunited some day! May the mother once more have her two daughters by her side! May they be united some day as they are already by the relationship of their languages, by the communion of their religion! May they be bound together by a bond of love that nothing can break, such as is going to unite you, my dear lord and lady! Amen!"

"Did you hear him?" Corancez asked Hautefeuille an hour later.

The *Ita missa est* had been spoken; the solemn "I will" had been exchanged, and the luncheon — including the mullet that surpassed those of Leghorn — had been brought to an end amid toasts, laughter, and the reading of the epithalamium upon which Don Fortunato had worked so long and so patiently. The entire company had adjourned to the gallery for coffee, and the two young men were chatting in the angle of a window close to the repaired Artemis.

"Did you hear him? The good old abbé simply worships me. — He worships me even too much, for I am not as noble as he has made me out. — He has

given Andryana a proof of inalienable affection in consenting to our secret marriage. He is as intelligent as it is possible to be. He knows Navagero to the very marrow and dreaded an unhappy future for Andryana if she did not escape from her brother's clutches. He is also a clever diplomatist, for he persuaded his old companion *in carcere duro* to lend us his little chapel.—Well, intelligence, diplomacy, friendship, and all the rest are swept on one side in the Italian soul by the law of primogeniture. Did you not hear how, in his quality of Cavour's friend, he made us feel that France was only the youngest scion of the great Latin family?—In this case the youngest has fared better than the eldest! But I pardoned all Don Fortunato's presumption when I thought of the face my brother-in-law will pull, Italian though he is, when he is shown the piece of paper which bears your name beside that of the Prince.—Would you like another proof of Corancez's luck? Look over yonder."

He pointed through the window to the sky covered with black clouds and to the street below, at the foot of the palace, where the north wind, sweeping along, made the promenaders huddle up in their cloaks.

"You don't understand?" he went on. "Don't you see you cannot sail again while such a sea is on? The ladies will stay at the hotel all night." As he spoke the Provençal smiled with an easy-going, semi-

complicity. Happily the newly made vicomtesse drew near and brought the *tête-à-tête* to an end. She was leaning on Madame de Carlsberg's arm. The two young women, so beautiful, so graceful, so delicate, so enamoured, formed a living commentary as they thus approached the two young men. And the pagan air that one seems to breathe in Italy was so keen, so penetrating, that Pierre's uneasy scruples were soothed by the love he could read in his mistress's brown eyes that were lit up by the same tender fire that shone in the blue eyes of the Venetian when she regarded her husband.

"You have come to us from the Prince, I suppose?" asked Corancez. "I know him! You will have no peace until he has shown you his treasures."

"Yes, he has been asking for you," said Andryana. "But I came on my own account. — A husband who abandons his wife an hour after marriage is rather hurried."

"Yes, it is a little too soon," repeated Ely. And the hidden meaning of the words, addressed as it was in reality to Hautefeuille, was as sweet as a kiss to the young man.

"Let us obey the Prince — and the Princess," he said, bearing his mistress's hand to his lips as though in playful gallantry, "and go to the treasure-house. You know all about it, I suppose?" he added, turning to his friend.

"Do I know it?" replied Corancez. "I had not been here an hour before I had gone through the whole place. He is a little bit —" and he tapped his forehead significantly, pointing to the old Prince and Don Fortunato, who were going out of the gallery with Miss Marsh. "He is a little bit crazy. — But you will judge for yourself."

All the procession — to use the term employed by the "representative of a great French family," as the Abbé Lagumina styled the Provençal — followed in Fregoso's wake and descended a narrow staircase leading to the private apartments of the collector. He was now leading, eager to show the way. As is often the case in big Italian mansions, the living rooms were as little as the reception halls were big. The Prince, when alone, lived in four cramped rooms, of which the scanty furniture indicated very plainly the stoicism of the old man, wrapped up in a dream-world and as indifferent to comfort as he was impervious to vanity. The twenty or twenty-five pieces that formed his museum were hung on the walls. At the first glance the Fregoso collection, celebrated all over the two hemispheres, was made up of shapeless fragments, rudely carved, that could not fail to produce the same impression upon the ignorant in such matters that Corancez had felt. Fregoso had studied antique art so closely that he now cared for nothing but statuary dating from an epoch anterior to Phidias. He wor-

shipped these relics of the sixth century which afford glimpses of primitive and heroic Greece — the Greece that repulsed the Asiatic invasion by the simple virtue of a superior, elevated race placed face to face with the countless hordes of an inferior people.

The Genoese nobleman had become the most devoted of archæologists after being one of the most active conspirators. And now he lived among the gods and heroes of that little known and distant Hellas as though he had been a contemporary of the famous soldier carved upon the stele of Aristion.

The gouty old man seemed to be miraculously rejuvenated the moment the last of his guests crossed the threshold of the first chamber, which usually served him as a smoking-room. He stood erect. His feet no longer dragged upon the floor as though too heavy for his strength. His dæmon, as his beloved Athenians would have said, had entered into him and he began to talk of his collection with a fire that arrested any inclination to smile. Under the influence of his glowing language the mutilated marble seemed to become animated and to live again. He could see the figures of two thousand four hundred years ago in all their freshness. And by a species of irresistible hypnotism his imagination imposed itself upon the most sceptical among his auditors.

"There," he said, "are the oldest carvings known. — Three statues of Hera, three Junos in their primitive

form: that is, wooden idols copied in stone by a hand that still hesitates as though unfamiliar with the work."

"The xoanon!" said Florence Marsh.

"What! You have heard of the xoanon?" cried Fregoso. And from this point on he addressed only the American girl. "In that case, Miss Marsh, you are capable of understanding the beauty of these three examples of art. They are unique. — Neither that of Delos, that of Samos, or that of the Acropolis is worthy to be compared with them. — You can see the creation of life in them. — Here you see the body in its sheath, and what a sheath! — One as shapeless and rough as the harshest of wools. And yet it breathes, the bosom is there, the hips, the legs are indicated. — Then the material grows supple, becoming a delicate fabric of fine wool, a long divided garment that lends itself to every movement. The statue awakes. It walks. — Just look at the grandeur of the torso under the peplum, the closely fitting cloak gathered in closely fitting folds on one side and spread fanlike on the other. Don't you admire the pose of the goddess as she stands, the weight of her body thrown upon the right foot, with the left advanced? — Now she moves, she lives! — Oh! Beauty! Heavenly Beauty! — And look at the Apollos!"

He was so excited by his feverish enthusiasm that he could no longer speak. He pointed in speechless admiration to three trunks carved in stone that had

been turned red by a long sojourn in a ferruginous soil. They were headless and armless, with legs of which only the stumps remained.

"Are they not the models of those at Orchomenos, Thera, and Tenea?" asked Miss Marsh.

"Certainly," replied the Prince, who could no longer contain his happiness. "They are funeral images, statues of some dead hero deified in the form of Apollo. — And to think that there are barbarians in the world who pretend that the Greeks went to Egypt and to Mesopotamia in search of their art! — Do you think an Egyptian or an Asiatic could ever have imagined that proud carriage, that curved chest, that strong back? — They never made anything but sitting idols glued to the wall. — Just look at the thighs! Homer says that Achilles could leap fifty feet. I have studied the subject deeply, and I find that the tiger's leap at its maximum is exactly that distance. It appears incredible to us that a man could do that. But look at those muscles — that makes such a leap a possibility. Art is seen at its perfection there; magnificent limbs capable of magnificent efforts. 'I moti divini,' as Leonardo said. If you put that energy at the service of the city and represent that city by gods, by its gods, you have Greece before you."

"And you have Venice, you have Florence, you have Sienna, you have Genoa, all Italy, in fact!" interrupted Don Fortunato.

"Italy is the humble pupil of Greece," replied Fregoso, solemnly. "She has received touches of grand beauty, but she is not the grand beauty."

Looking around, he added mysteriously: —

"Ah! we must close the shutters and lower the curtains. Will you help me, Don Fortunato?"

When the room had thus been darkened, the old man handed a lighted taper to the abbé and made a sign for them all to follow him. Approaching a head carved in marble placed upon a pedestal, he said, in a voice broken with emotion: —

"The Niobe of Phidias!"

The three women and the two young men then saw by the light of the tiny flame a shapeless fragment of marble. The nose had been broken and shattered. The place where the eyes ought to have been was hardly recognizable. Almost all the hair was missing. By chance, in all the dreadful destruction through which the head had passed, the lower lip and the chin had been spared. Accustomed as he was to the almost infantile *mise-en-scène* of the archæologist, Don Fortunato let the light shine full on the mutilated mouth and chin.

"What admirable life and suffering is displayed in that mouth!" cried Fregoso, "and what power there is in the chin! — Does it not express all the will and pride and energy of the queen who defied Latona? — You can hear the cry that issues from the lips. —

Follow the line of the cheek. From what remains you can figure the rest. — And what a noble form the artist has given the nose! — Look at this."

He took up the head, placed it at a certain angle, drew out his handkerchief, and taking a portion of it in his hands, he stretched it across the base of the forehead at the place where there was nothing but a gaping fracture in the stone.

"There you have the line of the nose! — I can see it. — I can see the tears that flow from her eyes," and he placed the head at another angle. "I can see them! — Come!" he said, sighing, after a silence, "we must return to everyday life. Draw up the curtains and open the shutters."

When daylight once more lit up the shapeless mass Fregoso sighed again. Then, taking up a head, rather less battered than the Niobe, he bowed to Miss Marsh, whose technical knowledge and attentive attitude had appealed in a flattering way to his mania.

"Miss Marsh," he said, "you are worthy of possessing a fragment of a statue that once graced the Acropolis. — Will you allow me to offer you this head, one only recently discovered? Look how it smiles."

The head really seemed to smile in the old man's hands, with a curious, disquieting smile, mysterious and sensual at the same time.

"It is the Eginetan smile, is it not?" asked the American girl.

"Archæologists have given it that name on account of the statues upon the famous pediment. But I call it the Elysian smile, the ecstasy that ought to wreathe forever the lips of those tasting the eternal happiness, revealed in advance to the faithful by the gods and goddesses. — Remember the line Æschylus wrote about Helen: 'Soul serene as the calm of the seas.' That smile expresses the line completely."

When Hautefeuille and the three women were once again in the landau that was taking them toward the port after the fantastic marriage and the more fantastic visit, they looked at each other with astonishment. It was about three o'clock in the afternoon and it seemed so strange to be again in the streets full of people, to see the houses with the little shops on the ground-floor, to read the bills that covered the walls, and to form part of the swarming, contemporary life. They felt the same impression that seizes one after a theatrical performance in the daytime when one is again on the boulevard flooded with sunshine. The deception of the theatre, which has held you for a couple of hours, makes the reawakening to life almost painful. Andryana was the first to speak of this uncomfortable sensation.

"If I had not Don Fortunato's epithalamium in my hand," she said, showing a little book she held, "I should think I had been dreaming. — He has just given it to me with great ceremony, telling me at

the same time that only four copies of it had been printed at the workshop where the proclamations of Manin, our last doge, used to be printed. There is one for Corancez, one for Fregoso, one for the abbé himself, and this one! — Yes, I should think I had been dreaming."

"And I also," said Florence, "if this head were not so heavy." She weighed the strange gift which the archæologist had honored her with in her little hands. "Heavens, how I should like to visit the museum without the Prince! — I have an idea that he hypnotized us, and that if he were not there we should see nothing. — For example, we saw the smile on this face when Fregoso showed it to us. — I cannot find the least trace of it now. Can you?"

"No! — Nor I! — Nor I! —" cried Ely de Carlsberg, Andryana, and Hautefeuille in chorus.

"I am certain, however," the latter added, laughingly, "that I saw Niobe, who had neither eyes nor cheeks, weeping."

"And I saw Apollo run, although he had no legs," said Madame de Carlsberg.

"And I saw Juno breathe, though she had no bosom," said Andryana.

"Corancez warned me of it," said Hautefeuille. "When Fregoso is absent, his collection is a simple heap of stones; when he is there, it is Olympus."

"That is because he is a believer and impassioned

about art," replied the Baroness. "The few hours we spent with him have taught me more about Greece than all my promenades in the Vatican, the capital, and the Offices. I do not even regret being unable to show you the Red Palace," she said, addressing Hautefeuille, "notwithstanding the fact that its Van Dycks are wonderful."

"You will have plenty of time to-morrow," said Miss Marsh. "My uncle will sail to-night, I know; but he will leave us here, for the *Jenny* is going to have a rough time, and he will not allow any one to be sick on his boat. Look how the sea is already rolling in to the port. — There is a tempest raging out at sea."

The landau arrived at the quay where the yacht's dingy was awaiting the travellers. Little waves were breaking against the walls. All the roadstead was agitated by the rising north wind and was a mass of tiny ripples, too small to affect the big steamers riding at anchor, but strong enough to pitch about the pleasure boats and fishing smacks. What a difference there was between this threatening gray swell that was felt even in the port, in spite of its protecting piers, and the wide mirror-like expanse of motionless sapphire which had spread before them the day before at the same hour in the open sea off Cannes! What a contrast between this cloudy sky and the azure dome that smiled down upon their departure, between this keen north wind and the perfumed sigh-

ing of the breeze yesterday!—But who thought of this? Certainly not Florence Marsh, completely happy in the possession of the archaic scalp she was taking on board. Certainly not Andryana, to whom the prospect of a night spent on shore was full of such happy promise; she was to meet her husband, and the idea of this clandestine and at the same time legitimate rendezvous after her romantic marriage had filled the loving woman with happiness. It was the first time for many years that she had forgotten her dreaded brother. Nor did Hautefeuille or his mistress notice the contrast, for the long hours of the night were to be spent together. The young man, who had fallen behind with Ely de Carlsberg, said gayly and yet tenderly, as they walked down toward the dingy of the *Jenny*, whose red, white, and black flag crackled in the breeze:—

"I am beginning to believe that Corancez is right about his lucky line!—And it appears to be contagious."

At the very moment he spoke, and as Ely answered him with a smile full of languor and voluptuousness, one of the sailors standing on the quay near the boat handed a large portfolio to Miss Marsh. It was the vessel's postman, who had just returned with the passengers' mail. The young girl rapidly ran through the fifteen or twenty letters.

"Here is a telegram for you, Hautefeuille," she said.

"You will see," he said to Ely, continuing his badinage, "it is good news."

He tore open the yellow slip. His visage lit up with a happy smile, and he handed the telegram to Madame de Carlsberg, saying: —

"What did I tell you?"

The despatch said simply: —

"Am leaving Cairo to-day. Shall be at Cannes Sunday or Monday at latest. Will send another telegram. So happy to see you again. OLIVIER DU PRAT."

CHAPTER VII

OLIVIER DU PRAT

THE second telegram arrived, and on the following Monday, at two o'clock, Pierre Hautefeuille was at the station at Cannes, awaiting the arrival of the express. It was the train he had taken to come from Paris in November, while still suffering from the attack of pleurisy that had been nearly fatal to him. Any one who had seen him getting out of the train on that November afternoon, thin, pale, shivering in spite of his furs, would never have recognized the invalid, the feverish convalescent, in the handsome young fellow who crossed the track four months later, supple and erect, rosy-cheeked and smiling, and with his eyes lit up with a happy reflection that brightened all his visage. Between the ages of twenty-five and thirty-five, in that period of life when the vital principle is ripe and intact, the most timid of men have at times a keen joy in life which betrays itself in every gesture. It is a sign that they love, that they are beloved, that all around smiles upon their love. And the sensation that no obstacle stands between them and their passions

fills them to overflowing with happiness. Their very physique seems to be transfigured, to be exalted. They have a different bearing, another look, a prouder attitude. It is as though some magnetic current emanated from happy lovers, that clothes them with a momentary beauty intelligible to every woman. They recognize at once the "enraptured lover," and hate him or sympathize with him, according as they are envious or indulgent, prosaic or romantic.

To this latter class belonged the two people whom Hautefeuille met face to face on the little central platform that serves as a sort of waiting-place at the Cannes station. One of these was Yvonne de Chésy, accompanied by her husband and Horace Brion. The other was the Marchesa Bonnacorsi, — as she still called herself, — escorted by her brother, Navagero. To reach them, the young man had to work his way through the fashionable crowd gathered there, as is usual at this hour, awaiting the train that is to carry them to Monte Carlo. The comments exchanged between the two women and their escorts during the few minutes that this operation took proved once more that the pettiness of malignant jealousy is not the characteristic of the gentler sex solely.

"Hallo! there is Hautefeuille!" said Madame de Chésy. "How pleased his sister will be to see him so wonderfully changed! — Don't you think he is a very handsome young fellow?"

"Yes, very handsome," assented the Venetian, "and the prettiest part of it is that he does not seem to be aware of it."

"He won't keep that quality long," said Brion. "It is 'Hautefeuille' here, 'Hautefeuille' there! You hear of nothing but Hautefeuille at your house," addressing Yvonne, "at Madame Bonnacorsi's, at Madame de Carlsberg's. He was simply a good, little, inoffensive, insignificant youngster. You are going to make him frightfully conceited."

"Without considering that he will compromise one of you sooner or later if it continues," said Navagero, glancing at his sister.

Since the trip to Genoa the artful Italian had noticed an unusual air about Andryana and had been seeking the motive of it, but in the wrong direction.

"Ah! That's it, is it?" cried Yvonne, laughingly. "Well, just to punish you I am going to ask him to come into our compartment, and shall invite him to dine with us at Monte Carlo, so that he can take charge of Gontran — who needs some one to look after him. I say, Pierre," she went on, addressing the young man who was now standing before her, "I attach you to my service for the afternoon and evening. — You will report it to me if my lord and master loses more than one hundred louis. — He lost a thousand the day before yesterday at *trente-et-quarante*. Two affairs like that every week throughout the winter would be a nice income. — I shall

have to begin thinking of how I am to earn the living expenses."

Chésy did not reply. He tugged at his mustache nervously, shrugging his shoulders. But his features contracted with a forced smile that was very different from the one his wife's witty sallies usually provoked. The catastrophe Dickie Marsh had predicted was slowly drawing near, and the unfortunate fellow was childish enough to try to offset the imminent disaster by risking the little means he had left upon the green cloth at Monte Carlo. Needless to say, his wife was entirely ignorant of the truth. Thus Yvonne's remark was singularly cruel for him, and for her, uttered as it was, in the presence of Brion, the professional banker of needy *mondaines*. Hautefeuille, who had been enlightened by his conversations with Corancez and Madame de Carlsberg, felt the irony hidden in the pretty little woman's conversation at such a moment, and said: —

"I am not going to Monte Carlo. I am simply waiting for one of my friends — for Olivier du Prat — whom, I think, you know."

"What! Olivier! Why, he is an old sweetheart of mine, when I was staying with your sister. — Yes, I was crazy about him for at least a fortnight. Bring him along then and invite him to dine with us this evening. You can take the five o'clock train."

"But he is married."

"Well, invite his wife as well," cried the giddy creature, gayly. "Come, Andryana, persuade him. You have more power over him than I have."

Continuing her teasing like a spoilt child, she took Navagero's arm, and turning away, nothing amused her more than to see the expression on the Italian's face when he saw his sister in conversation with some one of whom he was suspicious. She was ignorant of the service she was rendering her friend, who profited by the few instants of her brother's absence to say to Pierre: —

"He also arrives by this train. I only came down to see him. Will you tell him that I am going to meet Florence upon the *Jenny* to-morrow morning at eleven o'clock? And, above all, don't be annoyed if Alvise is not very polite. He has got the idea that you are paying me attentions. — But here is the train."

The locomotive issued out of the deep cutting that leads into Cannes, and Pierre saw Corancez's happy profile almost immediately. He jumped out before the train stopped, and, embracing Hautefeuille, said loudly, so that his wife could hear: —

"How good of you to come to meet me!" adding in a whisper, "Try to get my brother-in-law away for a minute."

"I cannot," replied Hautefeuille; "I am expecting Olivier du Prat. Did you not see him in the train? Ah! I see him."

He left the Provençal's side without troubling himself further about this new act in the *matrimonio segreto* which was being played upon the station platform, and ran toward a young man standing upon the step of the train looking at him with a tender, happy smile. Although Olivier du Prat was only the same age as Pierre, he looked several years older, so stern and strongly marked was his bronzed, emaciated face. His features were so irregular and striking that it was impossible to forget them. His black eyes, of a humid, velvety black, the whiteness of his regular teeth, his thick, flowing hair, gave a sort of animal grace to his physiognomy which counterbalanced the bitterness that seemed to be expressed in his mouth, his forehead, and, above all, his hollow cheeks. Without being tall, his arms and shoulders denoted great strength. Hardly had he stepped down from the carriage when he embraced Hautefeuille with a fervor that almost brought the happy tears to his eyes, and the two friends remained looking at each other for a few seconds, both forgetting to offer a helping hand to a young woman who was, in her turn, standing upon the high step awaiting with the most complete impassibility until one of the young men should think about her. Madame Olivier du Prat was a mere child of about twenty years of age, very pretty, very refined, and with a delicacy in her beauty that was almost doll-like and pretty. Her hair was of a golden color that was

cold through its very lightness. In her blue eyes there was, at this moment, that indefinable impenetrable expression that can be seen on the faces of most young wives before the friends of their husband's youth. Did she feel sympathy or antipathy, confidenee or suspicion, for Olivier's dearest friend, who had been her husband's groomsman at their marriage? Nothing could be gathered from her greeting when the young man came and excused himself for not having welcomed her before and assisted her to the platform. She hardly rested the tips of her fingers upon the hand that Pierre held out to her. But this might only be a natural shyness, as the remark she made when he asked her about the journey might express a natural desire to rest:—

"We had a very pleasant journey," she said, "but after such a long absence one longs to be at home again."

Yes, the remark was a natural one. But, uttered by the lips of the slender, chilly little wife, it also signified: "My husband wished to come and see you and I could not prevent him. But don't be mistaken, I am very dissatisfied about it." At any rate, this was the involuntary construction Hautefeuille placed upon the words in his inner consciousness. Thus he was grateful to Corancez when he approached and spared him the difficulty of replying. The train started off again, leaving the road clear for the passengers, and

the Southerner walked up, holding out his hand and smiling.

"How do you do, Olivier?—You don't remember me?—I am Corancez. We studied rhetoric together. If Pierre had only told me that you were in the train, we could have travelled together and had a good gossip about old times. You are looking splendidly, just as you did at twenty. Will you present me to Madame du Prat?"

"As a matter of fact, I did not recognize him," Olivier said a few minutes later, when they were in the carriage that was rolling toward the Hôtel des Palmes. "And yet he has not changed. He is the type of the Southerner, all familiarity that is intolerable when it is real and is ignoble when it is affected. Among all the detestable things in our country—and there is a good assortment—the most detestable is the 'old schoolfellow.' Because he has been a convict with you in one of those prisons called French colleges, he calls you by your Christian name, he addresses you as though you were his dearest friend. Do you see Corancez often?"

"He seems to think a great deal of you, Monsieur Hautefeuille," said the young wife. "He embraced you the instant he was on the platform."

"He is rather demonstrative," replied Pierre, "but he is really a very amiable fellow, and has been very useful to me."

"That surprises me," said Olivier. "But how is it you never spoke to me of him in your letters? I should have been more communicative."

This little conversation was also unimportant. But it was sufficient to establish that feeling of awkwardness that is often sufficient to destroy the joy felt in the most dearly desired meeting. Hautefeuille divined there was a little reproach in the remark made by his friend about his letters, and he felt again the sensation of hostility in Madame du Prat's observation. He became silent. The carriage was ascending the network of roads that he had traversed with Corancez upon the morning of their visit to the *Jenny*, and the white silhouette of the Villa Helmholtz stood out upon the left beyond the silvery foliage of the olive trees. His mistress's image reappeared in the mind of the young man with the most vivid intensity. He could not help making a comparison between his dear beloved Ely and his wife's friend. The little Frenchwoman seated by his side, a little constrained and stiff in spite of her elegant correctness, suddenly appeared to him so poor, so characterless, such a nullity, so uninteresting beside the supple, voluptuous image of the foreigner.

Berthe du Prat was the embodiment of the quiet and somewhat negative distinction that stamps the educated Parisienne (for the species exists). Her travelling costume was the work of a famous *costumier*, but she had been so careful to shun the merest approach to eccen-

tricity that it was completely impersonal. She was certainly pretty with the fragile, delicate prettiness of a Dresden china figure. But her visage was so well under control, her lips so close pressed, her eyes so devoid of expression, that her charming physiognomy did not provoke the least desire to know what sort of a soul it hid. It was so apparent that it would only be made up of accepted ideas, of conventional sentiments, of perfectly irreproachable desires. This is the sort of woman that men who have seen much life ordinarily seek for wives. After having corrupted his imagination in too many cases of irregularity, Olivier had naturally married the child whose beauty flattered his pride and whose irreproachable conduct was a guarantee against any cause for jealousy.

It was not less natural that Pierre, educated in the midst of conventional ideas, and who had suffered from the prejudices of his family, should remark in the composition of the young woman her very evident poverty of human sympathy, as well as all that was mean and mediocre, particularly by comparison.

Impressions of this kind quickly produced that shrinking, that retreat of the soul, that we call by a big word, convenient by reason of its very mystery; that is, antipathy. Pierre had not felt this antipathy at the first meeting with Mademoiselle Berthe Lyonnet, now Madame du Prat. And yet she ought to have displeased him still more, among her original surroundings, be-

tween her father, the most narrow-minded of solicitors, and her mother, a veritable dowager of the better class of Parisian middle life. But at that time the romantic side of the young man was as yet dormant. The intoxication of love had awakened him, and he was now sensitive to shades of feminine nature that had been hidden from him before. Being too little accustomed to analyzing himself to recognize how the past few weeks had modified his original ideas, he explained the sentiment of dislike that he felt for Berthe du Prat by this simple reason, one that helps us to justify all our ignorance on the subject of another's character.

"What is it that is changed in her?—She was so charming when she was married! And now she is quite a different woman.—Olivier has also changed. He used to be so tender, so loving, so gay! And now he is quite indifferent, almost melancholy. What has happened?—Can it be that he is not happy?"

The carriage stopped before the Hôtel des Palmes just as this idea took shape in Pierre's mind with implacable clearness. He kept repeating the question while watching Olivier and his wife in the vestibule. They walked about, chatting of the orders to be given about the luggage and to the chambermaid. Their very step was so out of harmony, so different, that by itself it opened up a vista of secret divorce between the two. It is in such minute, in the instinctive fusion, the unison in the gesture of both, that the inner

sympathy animating two lovers, or husband and wife, must be sought. Olivier and his wife walked out of step metaphorically, for expressions have to be created to characterize the shades of feeling that can neither be defined nor analyzed, but which are attested by indisputable evidence. And what a world of evidence was contained in a remark made by Du Prat, when the hotel clerk showed him the rooms that had been kept for him. The suite was composed of a large room with a big bed, two *cabinets de toilette*, one of which was huge, and a drawing-room.

"But where are you going to put my bed?" he asked. "This dressing-room is very little."

"I have another suite with a salon and two contiguous bedrooms," said the clerk; "but it is on the fourth floor."

"That doesn't matter," replied Du Prat.

He and his wife went up in the elevator without even glancing at the beautiful flowers with which Pierre had embellished the vases. He had beautified the conjugal chamber of Olivier and Berthe in the way he would have liked the room to be decorated which he would have shared with Ely. Left alone breathing the voluptuous aroma of mimosa mingled with roses and narcissus, he looked through the window across the clear afternoon landscape, the Esterels, the sea, and the islands. The little sunny chamber, quiet and attractive, was a veritable home for kisses with such per-

fumes and such a view. And yet Olivier's first idea had been to go and seek two separate rooms! This little fact added to the other remarks, and, above all, to his involuntary, intuitive conclusions, made Hautefeuille become meditative. A comparison between the passionate joy of his sweet romance and the strange coldness of this young household again arose in his mind. He recalled the first night of real love, that night in heavenly intimacy on the yacht. He remembered the second night, the one Ely and he had passed at Genoa. How sweet it had been to slumber a brief moment, his head resting upon the bosom of his beloved mistress. He thought of the very preceding evening when Ely had yielded to his supplications to allow him to visit her that night at the Villa Helmholtz, and he had glided into the garden by means of an unprotected slope. At the hothouse he found the door open with his mistress awaiting him. She had taken him to her room by a spiral staircase which led to the little salon and which only she used. Ah! What passionate kisses they had exchanged under the influence of the double emotions of Love and Danger! This time he left the room with despair and heartburning. He had returned alone, along the deserted roads, under the stars, dreaming of flight with her, with his beloved, of flight to some distant spot, to live with her forever, husband living with his wife! Could it be that Olivier had not the

same sentiments toward his young wife; that he could forego that right to rest upon her adored heart all the night and every night? Could he forego that precious right, the most precious of all, of passing all the night and every night, half the year to the end of the year, half a lifetime to the end of life, with her pressed close to him? Could he renounce the ecstasy of her presence when, with her dress, the woman had put off her social existence to become once again the simple, true being, beautified only with her youth, with her love, to become only the confiding, tender, all-renouncing creature that no other sees?

But if they loved each other so little after so short a married life, had he ever really loved her? And if he had never really loved her, why had he married her? — Pierre had got to this point in his reflections when he was abruptly aroused by a hand being laid upon his shoulder. Olivier was again standing before him, this time alone.

"Well," he said, "I have arranged everything. The rooms are rather high, but the view is all the more beautiful. Have you anything to do just now? Suppose we go for a walk."

"How about Madame du Prat?" asked Hautefeuille.

"We must give her time to get settled," replied Olivier, "and I admit that I am very glad to be alone with you for a few minutes. One can only talk when

there are two. By one I mean 'us.' — If you only knew how glad I am to be with you again!"

"My dear Olivier!" cried Pierre, deeply moved by the sincere accent of the remark.

They took each other's hands and their glances met, as at the station. No word was spoken. In the Fioretti of St. Francis it is related how St. Louis one day, disguised as a pilgrim, came and knocked at the door of the convent of Santa Maria degli Angeli. Another saint, named Egidio, opened the door and recognized him. The king and the monk kneeled, the one before the other, and then separated without speaking. "I read his heart," said Egidio, "and he read mine." The beautiful legend is the symbol of the meeting of friends such as the two young people. When two men who know each other, who have loved each other since infancy, as Pierre and Olivier did, meet face to face again, they have no need of protestation, no need of fresh assurances of their reciprocal faithfulness, esteem, confidence, respect, devotion; all the noble virtues of male affection need no words to explain them. They shine and glow, their mere presence sufficing, like a pure and steady flame. Once again the two friends felt that they could count upon each other. — Once more they felt how closely they were united with the bonds of fraternal love.

"So you were good enough to think of putting flowers in the rooms to welcome us?" said Olivier, taking his

friend's arm. "I will just give orders for them to be taken up to our apartments. — Let us go now. — Not to the Croisette, eh? — If it is like what it used to be when I stayed here before, it must be intolerable. Cannes was a real 'Snobopolis' at that time, with its army of princes and prince worshippers! — I remember some lovely spots between California and Vallauris, where the scenery is almost wild, where there are big forests of pines and of oaks — with none of those grotesque feather brushes they call palms, which I hate."

They were by this time leaving the hotel garden, and Du Prat pointed, as he spoke, to the alley of trees that gave its name to the fashionable caravansary. His friend began to laugh, as he replied: —

"Don't throw too much sepia over the gardens of poor Cannes. They are very excellent hotbeds for an invalid! I know something about it."

This was an allusion to an old joke that Pierre had often made in their youth when he would liken the wave of bitterness that seemed to sweep over Olivier in his evil moments to the jet of black liquid projected by the cuttlefish to hide its whereabouts. Olivier also laughed at the memories the souvenir recalled. But he continued: —

"I don't recognize you in your present state. You fraternize with Corancez, you the irreconcilable! You, the master of Chaméane, love these paltry gardens, with their lawns that they turn up in spring, with their

colored metallic trees and with their imitation verdure! — I prefer that."

And he pointed, as he spoke, to the turning of the road, where the mountain showed itself covered with a fleece of dark pines and light larch trees. At its foot the line of villas from Cannes to Golfe Juan continued for a little distance and then ceased, leaving nothing upon the mountain side right up to the peak but a growth of primitive forest. To the right spread the sea, deserted, unbroken by even a single sail. The sense of isolation was so complete that for a moment, glancing from the verdant mountain to the shimmering sea, the illusion of what the landscape must have been before it had become a fashionable wintering-place was startlingly complete.

The two young men walked on for a few hundred yards further and plunged into mid-forest. The red trunks of the pines were now growing so thickly around them that the azure brilliancy of the waves could only be seen fitfully. The black foliage above their heads was outlined against the open sky with singular distinctness. The refreshing, penetrating odor of resin, mingled at intervals with the delicate perfume of a large, flowing mimosa, enveloped them in a balmy atmosphere.

Olivier surveyed the forest with its northern aspect with all the pleasure of a traveller returning from the East, tired of sandy horizons, weary of that monoto-

nous, implacably burnished nature, and who feels a keen joy at the sight of a variegated vegetation and in the multitudinous colors of the European landscape.

Hautefeuille, for his part, looked at Olivier. Disquieted to the verge of anxiety by the enigma of a marriage that he had formerly accepted without remark, he began to study the changing shades of thought, grave and gay, that flitted across his friend's candid physiognomy. Olivier was plainly more at ease in the absence of his wife. But he retained the expression of scorn in his eyes and the bitter curve on his lips that his friend knew so well. These signs were the invariable forerunners of one of those acrimonious fits of which Madame de Carlsberg had told Madame Brion. Pierre had always suffered for his friend when these crises attacked Olivier, and when he began to speak about himself and about life in a tone of cruel scorn that disclosed an abnormal state of cynical disillusion, he suffered doubly to-day; for his heart was unusually sensitive by reason of the love that filled it. What would his suffering have been could he have understood the entire significance of the remarks in which his companion's melancholy sought relief!

"It is strange," Olivier began musingly, "how complete a presentiment of life we have while still very young! I remember, as clearly as though it were this very moment, a walk we took together in Auvergne. —I am sure you do not recall it. We had returned

to Chaméane from La Varenne, during the vacation after our third year. I had spent a fortnight with your mother, and upon the morrow I was to return to that abominable rascal, my guardian. It was in September. The sky was as soft as it is to-day, and the atmosphere was as transparent. We sat down at the foot of a larch for a few minutes' rest. I could see you before me. I saw the sturdy tree, the lovely forest, the glorious sky. All at once I felt a nameless languor, a sickly yearning for death. The idea suddenly came over me that life held nothing better for me, that I need expect nothing. — What caused such an idea? Whence did it come, for I was only sixteen then? — Even now I cannot explain it. But I shall never forget the intense suffering that wrung my soul that mild afternoon under the branches of the huge tree, with you by my side. It was as though I felt in advance all the misery, all the vanity, all the disasters of my life."

"You have no right to speak in that way," said Hautefeuille. "What miseries have you? What failures? What disasters? — You are thirty-two. You are young. You are strong. Everything has smiled upon you. You have been lucky in fortune, in your career, — in your marriage. You have an income of eighty thousand a year. You are going to be First Secretary. You have a charming wife — and a friend from Monomotapa," he added laughingly.

Olivier's deep sigh pained him keenly. He felt all the melancholy that had prompted his outbreak, which to others would have seemed singularly exaggerated! And, as he had often done before, he combated it with a little commonplace raillery. It was rare that Du Prat, with his delicate, critical turn of mind, sensitive to the least lack of good taste, did not also change his mood when his friend spoke in such a way. But this time the weight upon his heart was too heavy. He continued in a duller, more hopeless tone:—

"Everything has smiled upon me?" and he shrugged his shoulders. "And yet it seems so when one makes up the account with words.—But in reality, at thirty-two youth is over, the real, the only youth is finished.—Health and good fortune still preserve you from a few worries, but for how long?—They are not additional happinesses.—As to my career.—Don't let us speak on that idiotic subject.—And my marriage?"

He paused for a second as though he recoiled from the confidence he had been about to make. Then with a bitterness in his voice that made Pierre shudder, for it revealed an interior abscess that was full to bursting with an evil, malignant substance:—

"My marriage? Well, it is a failure like all the rest, a frightful, sinister failure.—But," he added, shaking his head, "what does it matter, either that or anything else?"

And he went on while Pierre listened without further interruption: —

"Did you never wonder what decided me to marry? You thought, I suppose, like everybody else, that I was tired of a solitary life, and that I wanted to settle down, that I had met a match that fulfilled all the conditions requisite for a happy alliance. Nothing was lacking. There was a good dowry, an honorable name, a pretty, well-educated girl. And you thought the marriage the most natural thing in the world. I don't wonder at it. It was simply an illustration of ordinary ideas. We are the slaves of custom without even knowing it. We ask why so-and-so has not married like every one else. But we never think of asking why so-and-so has married like every one else when he is not every one else. — Besides, you did not know, you could not know, what bitter experiences had brought me to that point. — We have always respected each other in our confidences, my dear Pierre. That is why our friendship has remained so noble, so rare, something so different from the loathsome companionship that most men designate by the name. I never spoke to you about my mistresses, about my loves. I never sought to hear of yours. Such vilenesses, thank God, have always remained outside our affection."

"Stop," broke in Hautefeuille, hurriedly, "don't sully your souvenirs in that way. I don't know them, but they must be sacred. If I have never questioned you

about the secrets of your sentiments, my dear Olivier, it is through respect for them and not through any respect for our friendship. — Our affection would not have been limited by association with a true, deep love. Do not calumniate yourself. Do not tell me that you have never loved truly and deeply, and do not blaspheme."

"True love!" interrupted Olivier, with singular irony. "I don't even know what the two words taken together mean. I have had more than one mistress. And, when I think of them, they all represent wild desire, followed by deeper disgust; bitter sensuality, saturated with jealousy, much falsehood understood, much falsehood uttered, and not an emotion, not one, do you understand? Not one that I would wish to recall, not a happiness, not a noble action, not a satisfaction! Whose fault is it? Is it due to the women I have met or to myself, to their vileness or to my poverty of heart? — I cannot say."

"The heart is not poor," interrupted Hautefeuille, with just as much earnestness, "in him who has been the friend that you have been to me."

"I have been that friend to you because you are yourself, my dear Pierre," replied Olivier, in a tone of absolute sincerity. "Besides, the senses have no place in friendship. They have a big one in love, and my senses are cruel. I have always suffered from evil desires, from wicked voluptuousness. And I cannot tell

you what leaven of ferocity has worked in the deepest depths of my soul every time that my desires have been strongly aroused.—I do not justify myself. I do not explain the mystery. It exists, that is all. And all my *liaisons*, from the first to the last, have been poisoned by this strange, fermenting mixture of hatred."

"Yes," he went on, "from the first to the last.—Above all, the last!—It was at Rome, two years ago. If ever I thought I could love it was at that time. In that unique city I met a woman, herself unique, different from the others, with so much unflinching courage in her mind, so much charm in her heart, without any meanness, without any smallness, and beautiful!—Ah! so beautiful!—And then our pride clashed and wounded us both. She had had lovers before me.—One at least, whom I was sure about.—He was a Russian, and had been killed at Plevna. I knew she had loved him. And although he was no more, that unreasoning jealousy, the unjust, inexpressible jealousy of the dead, made me cruel toward the unhappy woman, even before our first rendezvous, from our first kisses!—I treated her brutally.—She was proud and coquettish. She avenged herself for my cruelty. She accepted another lover without dismissing me—or I thought she did, which amounts to the same thing.—In any case she made me suffer so horribly that I left her, the first. I left her abruptly

one day without even saying farewell, swearing that never again would I seek satisfaction in that way.

"I was at the middle of my life. From the passionate experiences I had tasted, all that remained to me was such a poverty of sentiment, such a singular interior distortion, if I may so explain myself, such a terrible weariness of my mode of life, that I made a sudden resolution to change it, certain that nothing would be, nothing could be, worse. — There are marriages of calculation, of sentiment, of convenience, of reason. I made a marriage of weariness. — I don't think that such cases are rare. But it is much more rare for one to admit having made such a marriage. I admit it.— I never had but one originality. I was never hypocritical with myself. I hope to die without having lost the quality. — There you have my story."

"And yet you seemed to love your *fiancée*," said Pierre. "If you had not loved her, or if you had not thought you loved her, you, the honorable friend, whom I know so well, would never have linked your life with hers."

"I did not love her," replied Olivier. "I never thought I loved her. I hoped to love her. I told myself that I should feel what I had never felt at the contact of this soul so different, so new, so fresh, and in a life that resembled my past so little. Yes, once again I hoped and tried to feel." He accentuated the words with singular energy. "The real evil of

this twilight of the century is the obstinate headstrong research of emotion. That malady I have.—I said to myself, to soothe my conscience: 'If I do not marry this girl, another will. She will be swept off by one of those countless rascals that flourish upon the Paris boulevards and one who is only hungry for her dowry. I shall not be a worse husband than such a one.'—And then I hoped for children, for a son.—Even that would not stir my heart now, I believe. The experiment has been made. Six months have been enough. My wife does not love me. I do not love, I never shall love, my wife.—There is the whole account.—But you are right. Honor still remains, and I will keep my word to the best of my ability."

He passed his hand before his eyes and across his brow, as though to drive away the hideous ideas that he had just evoked with such brutal frankness, and went on more calmly:—

"I don't know why I should sadden you with my nervousness iu the first moments of our meeting.—Yes, I do know.—It is the fault of this forest, of the color of the sky, of the souvenir of sixteen years ago, a souvenir so exact that it is a veritable obsession. However, it is finished. Don't speak; don't console me. The bitter pill has to be swallowed without a word."

Then, with a smile, once again tender and open, he said:—

"Let us talk about yourself. What are you doing here? How are you? I see from your face that the South has cured you. But upon these shores, where the sun does you good, the weariness of life does you so much harm, that it is more than compensated for."

"But I assure you I am not weary, not the least in the world!" replied Pierre.

He felt that Olivier could not, that he ought not to, speak any more intimately about his married life. His heart was torn by the confidences he had just been listening to, and he could only wait until the wounds which had been so suddenly exposed to his view were less irritated, more healed. There was nothing left for him to do other than to give way to his friend's capricious curiosity. Besides, if Du Prat was going to stay at Cannes for any length of time, he must be prepared to see him going about and paying visits. He, therefore, continued: —

"What do I do? — Really, I hardly know. I simply go on living. — I go out rather less than ordinarily. You have not yet felt the charm of Cannes, for you stayed here too short a time. It is a town of little circles. You must be in one or two to feel the sweetness of this place. I have been lucky enough to fall into the most agreeable of all. — Tennis, golf, five o'clock teas, dinners here and there, and you have the springtime upon you before you have even noticed that August has ended. And then there is yachting. — When

I received your telegram from Cairo, I was at Genoa making a cruise on board an American's yacht. I will introduce you to him. His name is Marsh. He is very original, and will amuse you."

"I doubt it very much," replied Olivier. "I don't get along very well with the Americans. The useless energy of the race tires me even to think of. And what a lot of them there is! — What numbers I saw in Cairo, or on the Nile, men and women, all rich, all healthy, all active, all intelligent, observing everything, understanding everything, knowing everything, digesting everything! — And all had gone, were going, or were going again round the world. They seemed to me to be a moral representation of those mountebanks one seeks at the fairs, who swallow a raw fowl, a shoe sole, a dozen rifle-balls, and a glass of water into the bargain. — Where do they store the pile of incoherent impressions which they must carry away with them? — It is a puzzle to me. — But your Yankee must be of a different sort, since he seems to have pleased you. — What reigning or dethroned prince had he on board?"

"None!" replied Hautefeuille, happy to see the misanthropic humor of his friend disappearing before his gayety. "There was simply his niece, Miss Florence, who has, I must admit, the ostrich-like stomach which amuses you so much. She paints, she is an archæologist and a chemist, but she is also a very fine

girl. — Then there was a Venetian lady, the Marchesa Bonnacorsi, a living Veronese."

"I like them best in pictures," said Olivier. "The resemblance of Italians to the paintings of the great masters was my despair in Rome. You enter a salon and you see a Luini talking to a Correggio upon a sofa in the corner. You draw near them. And you find that the Luini is telling the plot of the vilest and stupidest of the latest French novel to the Correggio, who listens to the Luini with an interest that disgusts you forever with the Madonnas of both painters. But, all the same, you had a pretty cosmopolitan party on your boat. Two Americans, an Italian, and a Frenchman. — What other nations were represented?"

"France, or rather Paris, and Austria, that was all. — Paris was represented by the two Chésys. You know the wife; Yvonne. — Don't you remember? — Mademoiselle Bressuire."

"What, the girl whom your sister wanted me to marry? She who displayed her shoulders to the middle of her back and painted her face at sixteen years old? — Who is her lover?"

"Why, she is the best little woman in the world!" replied Hautefeuille.

"Then she was a poor representative of Paris," said Olivier. "What about the Austrian?"

"The Austrian?" replied Pierre.

He hesitated for a second. He knew that he would

have to speak of his mistress sooner or later to Olivier. He had only mentioned his cruise in the yacht in order to bring her name into their first conversation. And yet he was afraid. What remark would his idol's name call forth from his ironical friend? There was a little unsteadiness in his voice as he repeated:

"The Austrian?" and he added, "Oh, Austria was represented by the Baroness de Carlsberg, whom you met in Rome. We have often spoken about you."

"Yes, I met her in Rome," said Olivier.

It was now his turn to hesitate. At the sound of that name spoken by his friend in the silence of the wood where was heard but the rustling of the pines, his surprise was so great that his very countenance changed. His hesitation, this alteration in his physiognomy, the very reply of Du Prat, ought to have warned Hautefeuille of some impending danger. But he dared not look at his friend, who had now mastered his quivering nerves, and said:—

"Yes, I remember, the Archduke has a villa at Cannes.—Does she live with him now?"

"Why, was she separated from him then?" asked Pierre.

"Legally, no; in reality, yes," replied Olivier.

He was too much of a gentleman to make even the least slighting remark about a woman of whom he had been the lover. The bitter, profound grudge he bore her manifested itself in a strange way. As he could

not, as he would not speak any evil of her, he began to praise her husband, the man whom he detested the most in the world.

"I never knew why they could not agree," he said. "She is very intelligent, and he is one of the first men of his time. He is one of the three or four important personages, with the Emperor of Brazil, the Prince of Monaco, and the Archduke of Bavaria, who have taken a place in the ranks of science to the honor of royalty. It appears that he is a true scientist."

"He may be a true scientist," replied Hautefeuille; "I don't deny it. But he is a detestable creature. — If you had only seen him as I did, in his wife's salon, making a violent scene before six people, you would admire her for supporting life with that monster, even for a single day, and you would pity her."

He spoke now with a passionate seriousness. At any time Olivier would have been surprised at the intensity of this openly avowed interest, for he knew Pierre to be very undemonstrative. But now, agitated as he was, the sincerity of his friend surprised him still more, stirred him more deeply. He looked at him again. He perceived an expression that he had never before seen on the face he had known from childhood. In a sudden blinding flash of overpowering intuition, he understood. He did not grasp the entire truth as yet. But he saw enough to stun him.

"Does he love her?" he asked himself. The question sprang into being in his mind suddenly, spontaneously, as though an unknown voice had whispered it in him in spite of himself.

The idea was too unexpected, too agonizing, for a reaction to fail to follow instantly. "I am mad," he thought; "it is impossible." And yet he felt that it was beyond his strength to question Pierre about the way he had made the acquaintance of Madame de Carlsberg, about their trip to Genoa, about the life he led at Cannes. Such inability to lay bare the truth seizes one before certain hypotheses which touch the tenderest, most sensitive part of the heart. He replied simply: —

"Perhaps you are right. I was only going upon hearsay."

The conversation continued without any further mention of the Baroness Ely's name. The two friends spoke of their travels, of Italy, of Egypt. But when the spirit of observation is once aroused, it is not soothed to slumber by a mere act of the will. It is like an instinctive and uncontrollable force working within us and around us, in spite of us, until the moment that it has satisfied its desire to know. During the long promenade, upon their return, during and after dinner, all Olivier's powers of attention were involuntarily, unceasingly, painfully concentrated upon Pierre. It was as though there were two beings in

him. He joked, replied to his wife, gave orders about the service. And yet all his senses were upon the *qui vive*, and he discovered signs by the score that he had not noticed at first, absorbed as he had been by the joy of revisiting his friend, and then later by his thoughts about himself and his destiny.

In the first place, he saw the indefinable but unmistakable indications of a more virile, more decided personality in Pierre, in his looks, in his features, in his gestures and attitude. His former *farouche* timidity had yielded to the proud reserve that the certainty of being loved gives to some delicate, romantic natures. Next he noted the principal, the infallible sign of secret happiness, the expression of tender ecstasy that seemed to lurk in the depths of his eyes, and a constant far-away look. Never had Olivier noticed this abstraction in their former conversations. Never had Pierre's thoughts been in other climes while his friend spoke. Lovers are all alike. They speak to you. You speak to them. They know not what to say, nor do they hear you. Their soul is elsewhere. At this moment Pierre's thoughts were upon the deck of a yacht illumined by the moonbeams; upon the staircase of an old Italian palace; in the patio of the Villa Helmholtz, far away from the little table of the hotel dining-room; far away from Madame du Prat, upon whom he forgot to attend; far away from Olivier, whom he no longer even saw!

And then Olivier noticed tiny details of masculine adornment, little nothings which disclosed the tender coquetting of a mistress who would not have her lover make a gesture without being reminded of her by some caressing souvenir. Pierre wore a ring upon his little finger that his friend had never seen, two golden serpents interlaced, with emerald heads. A St. George medal, which he did not recognize, was hanging to his watch-chain. In taking out his handkerchief it gave forth a delicate perfume that Pierre had never formerly used. Olivier had been engaged in too many intrigues to be mistaken for an instant about any of these evidences of feminine influence. They were only additional proofs. They simply confirmed the change he had noticed in Pierre's inexplicable acquaintance with Corancez, in his liking for cosmopolitan society, in the unexpected frivolity of his mode of life, in his evident sympathy for things at Cannes that Olivier had expected would have most shocked his friend.

How was it possible not to put these facts together? How was it possible not to draw the conclusion from them that Pierre was in love? But with whom? Did the energy with which he had attacked the Archduke prove that he loved Madame de Carlsberg? Had he not defended Madame de Chésy with the same energy? Had he not equally warmly sung the praises of Madame Bonnacorsi's beauty, of Miss Marsh's grace?

While Olivier was studying his friend with a super-acute and almost mechanical tension of the nerves, these three names occurred to him again and again. Ah! how he longed for another sign among all these indications; for one irrefutable proof, something that would drive away and annihilate the first hypothesis, the one that he had seen for an instant as in a flash, and yet plainly enough for him to be already possessed by it as by the most ghastly, threatening nightmare.

Toward eleven o'clock Pierre withdrew upon the pretext that the travellers must be longing to rest. Olivier, having taken leave of his wife, felt that it was impossible any longer to support this uncertainty. Often, in former days, when Pierre and he were together in the country, if one was suffering from insomnia, he would awake the other, and they would go out for a walk in the night air, talking incessantly. Olivier thought that this would be the surest way of exorcising the idea that was again beginning to haunt him, an idea that stirred up in him, without his knowing why, a wave of unreasoning, violent, almost savage, revolt. Yes, he would go and talk to Hautefeuille. That would do him good, although he did not know how nor of what they would talk.

The most elementary delicacy would prevent him speaking a word that could arouse the suspicions of his friend, no matter what were the relations that existed between Pierre and Ely de Carlsberg. But

the conversations of close friends afford such opportunities! Perhaps an intonation of the voice, a look, a movement, would furnish him with the passionately desired sign after which he would never again even think of the possibility of Pierre having a sentiment for his former mistress.

He was already in bed when this idea seized him. Automatically, without any further reflection, he rose. He descended the staircases of the immense hotel, now silent and in semi-darkness. He arrived at Hautefeuille's door. He knocked. There was no reply. He knocked again, and again there was silence. The key was in the lock. He turned it and entered. By the light of the moon that flooded the room through the open window, he saw that the bed was undisturbed. Pierre had gone out.

Why did Olivier feel a sudden pain at his heart, followed by an inexpressible rush of melancholy, as he noticed this? He went and leaned on the window rail. He glanced over the immense horizon. He saw all the serene beauty of the Southern night, the stars that glittered in the soft, velvety blue of the sky, the bronzed golden moon whose beams played caressingly with the sea — the sea that rolled supple and vast afar off. He saw the lights of the town shining among the black masses of shrubbery in the gardens. The warm breeze enveloped him with the languorous, enthralling, enchanting odor of lemon blos-

som. What a divine night for the meeting of lovers! And what a divine night for a lover dreaming of his mistress, as he wandered along the solitary paths! — Was Pierre that lover? Had he gone to meet his mistress? Or was he simply pursuing his vision in the perfumed solitude of the gardens? — How was he to know? — Olivier thought of the Yvonne de Chésy with whom he had danced. He recalled all the Americans and the Italians he had ever known, in order to compose a Marchesa Bonnacorsi and an ideal Florence Marsh. — It was in vain! Always did his imagination return to the souvenir of Ely de Carlsberg, to that mistress of a so short time ago, whose image was still so present. Always did his thoughts return to the memory of those caresses, whose intoxicating tenderness he had tested. And he sighed, sadly and mournfully, in the pure night air: —

"Ah! What unhappiness if he loves her! My God! What unhappiness!"

His sigh floated off and was lost in the soft voluptuous breeze which bore it away from him who unconsciously called it forth. At this moment Pierre was making his way through the shrubbery of the Villa Helmholtz gardens as he had done once before. He arrived at the door of the hothouse. A woman awaited him there, trembling with love and terror. — What caused the terror? Not the fear of being surprised

in this secret meeting. Ely's courage was superior to such weaknesses. No. She knew that Olivier had returned that day. She knew that he had passed the afternoon talking with Pierre. She knew that her name must have been pronounced between them. She was certain that Pierre would not betray their dear secret. But he was so young, so innocent, so transparent to the observer, while the other was so penetrating, so keen! — She was going to learn if their love had been suspected by Olivier, if this man had warned his friend against her in revenge. — When she heard Pierre's slow, furtive footsteps upon the pathway, her heart beat so strongly that she seemed to hear it echo through the deathly silence of the hothouse! — He is here. She takes his hand. She feels that the beloved fingers reply with their old confident pressure. She takes him in her arms. She seeks his mouth and their lips unite in a kiss in which she feels that he is all hers to the depths of his soul. That other has not spoken! And now tears begin to flow down the cheeks of the loving woman, warm tears that the lover dries with his burning kisses, as he asks: —

"What, are you weeping! What is it, my beloved?"

"I love you," she replies, "and they are tears of joy."

CHAPTER VIII

FRIEND AND MISTRESS

Olivier du Prat thought he knew himself. It was a pretension he had often justified. He was really, as he had said to Hautefeuille, a child of the declining century in his tastes, in his passion, almost mania, for self-analysis, in his thirst for emotions, in his powerlessness to remain faithful to any one of his sensations, in his useless lucidity, as regarded himself, and in his indulgence of the morbid, unsatisfied, unquiet longings of his nature. He felt his case was irremediable, the gloomy sign that characterizes the tragically disturbed age we live in, and one of the infallible marks of decadence in a race. Healthy life does not entirely rest upon a freedom from wounds. For the body as for the soul, for a nation as for an individual, vigorous life is indicated by the power to heal those that are made. Olivier was entirely without this capacity. Even the most distant troubles of his childhood became so real as to be agonizing when he thought of them after all the years that had passed. In recalling their walk among the mountains of Auvergne, as he

had done the night before to Pierre, he had simply been thinking aloud as he always thought to himself. His imagination was incessantly occupied in turning and returning with an unhealthy activity of mental retrospection, to the hours, the minutes, that had forever vanished. In his mind he reanimated, revived, the past and lived it over again. And by this self-abandonment to a past sensitiveness he continually destroyed all present sensitiveness. He never allowed the wounds that had once been made to heal over, and his oldest injury was always ready to bleed afresh.

This unfortunate singularity of his nature would, under any circumstances, have made a meeting with Madame de Carlsberg very painful, even though the dearest friend of his youth had not been concerned in it. And he would never have heard that his friend loved without being deeply moved. He knew he was so tender-hearted, so defenceless, so vulnerable! Here, again, he was the victim of a retrospective sensitiveness. Friendship carried to the extreme point that his feeling for Hautefeuille occupied is a sentiment of the eighteenth rather than of the thirty-second year. In the first flush of youth, when the soul is all innocence, freshness, and purity, these fervent companionships, these enthusiasms of voluntary fraternity, these passionate, susceptible, absolute friendships, often appear to quickly fade away. Later in life self-interest and experience individualize one and isolation is un-

avoidable. Complete communion of soul with soul becomes possible only by the sorcery of love, and friendship ceases to suffice. It is relegated to the background with those family affections that once also occupied a unique place in the child and in the youth. Certain men there are, however, and Olivier was one of the number, upon whom the impression made by friendships about their eighteenth year has been too deep, too ineffaceable, and, above all, too delicate, to be ever forgotten, and even to be ever equalled. It remains an incomparable sentiment. These men, like Olivier, may pass through burning passions, suffer all the feverish shocks of love, be bruised in the most daring intrigues, but the true romance of their sensitive natures is not to be found in these passions. It is to be found in those hours of life when, in thought, they project themselves into the future with an ideal companion, with a brother that they have chosen, in whose society they realize for an instant La Fontaine's sublime fable, the complete union of mind, tastes, hopes: —

> "And one possess'd nothing that the other did not share."

In the case of Olivier and Pierre this ideal comradeship had been sacredly cemented. Not only had they been brothers in their dreams, they had been brothers in arms. They were nineteen years of age in 1870. At the first news of the immense national shipwreck

both had enlisted. Both had gone through the entire war. The first snowfall of the winter that saw the terrible campaign found them bivouacking upon the banks of the Loire. It was as though this friendship of the two students, now become soldiers in the same battalion, had been heroically baptized. And they had learned to esteem as much as they loved each other as they simply, bravely, obscurely risked their lives side by side. These souvenirs of their youth had remained intact and living in both, but particularly in Olivier. For him they were the only recollections unmixed with bitterness, unsullied by remorse. Before these memories his life had been full of sadness, completely orphaned as he had been early in life and turned over to the guardianship of a horribly selfish uncle. Sensual and jealous, suspicious and despotic as he was, he had only known the bitterness and the pains of love apart from his souvenirs of Pierre. Nothing more is necessary to explain to what a degree this illogical and passionate, this troubled and disillusioned being was moved by the mere idea that a woman had come between his friend and him — and what a woman, if she were Madame de Carlsberg, so hated, despised, condemned by him formerly!

Olivier's imagination could only attach itself to two precise facts during the night that followed the arousing of his first suspicions, — a night that was given up to the consideration, one by one, of the possibilities

of a love-affair between Ely and Hautefeuille. These were the character of his friend and that of his former mistress. The character of his friend made him fear for him; the character of his former mistress made him fear for her. Upon this latter point also his feelings were very complex. He was convinced that Ely de Carlsberg had had a lover before him, and the idea had tortured him. He was convinced that she had had a lover at the same time with him, and he had left her on account of this idea. He was mistaken, but he was sincere, and had only yielded to proofs of coquetry that appeared sufficiently damaging to convince his jealous nature. This double conviction had left in him a scornful resentment against Ely; had left that inexpiable bitterness which compels us to continually vilify in our mind an image that we despairingly realize can never become entirely indifferent to us. He would have considered a *liaison* with such a creature a frightful misfortune for any man. What, then, were his feelings when he saw that she had made herself beloved by his friend or that she might make herself beloved?—Having such a prejudiced, violent contempt for this sort of woman, Olivier divined what was really the truth, although it had remained so for so short a time. Ely had been angered by his departure. She had felt the same resentment with him that he had felt with her. Chance had brought her face to face with his dearest friend, with Pierre

Hautefeuille, of whom he had so often spoken in exalted terms. She must have decided upon revenge, upon a vengeance that resembled her — criminal, refined, and so profoundly, so cruelly, intelligent! — In this way Du Prat reasoned. And, although his reasoning was only hypothetical, he felt, as he fed his mind with such thoughts, a suffering mingled with a sort of unhealthy and irresistible satisfaction that would have terrified him had he considered it calmly. To suppose that Madame de Carlsberg had avenged herself upon him with such calculation was to suppose that she had not forgotten him. The windings in the human heart are so strange! In spite of the fact that he had insulted his former mistress all the time they had been together, that he had left her first, without a farewell, that he had married after due reflection, and had resolved to keep his vows honorably — in spite of all this, the idea that she still remembered him secretly stirred him strangely. It must be remembered that he was just passing through one of the most dangerous moments of conjugal existence. Every moral crisis is complicated with a multitude of contradictory elements in souls such as his, — souls without fixed principles, that are turned aside at every moment by the influence of their faintest impression. Marriages contracted through sheer lassitude, such as the one he admitted having contracted, bring down their own punishment upon the abominable egoism that prompts them. They have to pay a penalty worse than

the most redoubtable catastrophe. They are followed immediately by profound, incurable weariness. The man, thirty years of age, who, thinking he is disgusted forever with sensual passions, and who, mistaking this disgust for wisdom, settles down, as the saying is, quickly finds that those very passions that sickened him are as necessary to him as morphine is to the morphine maniac who has been deprived of his Pravaz syringe, as necessary as alcohol is to the inebriate put upon a *régime* of pure water. He suffers from a species of nostalgia, of longing for those unhealthy emotions whose fruitlessness he has himself recognized and condemned. If a brutal but very exact comparison can be borrowed from modern pathology, he becomes a favorable medium for the cultivation of all the morbid germs floating in his atmosphere. And at the very moment when everything seems to point to the pacific arrangement of their destiny, some revolution takes place, as it was doing in Olivier,—a revolution so rapid, so terrible, that the witness and victims of these sudden wild outbursts are left almost more disconcerted than despairing.

He had therefore passed the night meditating upon all the details, significant and unimportant, that he had observed in the afternoon and evening, from the moment he had remarked the unexpected intimacy of Pierre with Corancez until the instant he had entered his friend's chamber hoping for an explanation, and had found it empty.

Toward five o'clock he fell asleep, slumbering brokenly and heavily as one does in a railway train in the morning. He dreamed upon the lines of thought that had kept him awake, as was to be expected. But it heightened his uneasiness by an appearance of presentiment. He thought he was again in the little salon of the palace at Rome, where Ely de Carlsberg used to receive him. Suddenly his wife arrived, leading Pierre Hautefeuille by the hand. Pierre stopped, as though smitten with terror, and tried to scream. Suddenly paralysis struck him down, turning his leg rigid, forcing out his left eye, drawing down the corner of his mouth, whence not a sound issued! The suffering caused by this nightmare was so intense that Olivier felt its influence even after he was awake.

He felt so ill that he could not even wait to see his wife before going out. He scribbled a line telling her that he was suffering from a slight headache, and that he had gone out to try and seek relief. He added that he had not liked to disturb her so early in the morning, and that he would be back about nine o'clock. He told her, however, that she was not to await his return should he happen to be late.

He felt that he must steady his nerves by means of a long walk so as to be prepared to cope with the events of the day, which he was convinced would be decisive. Prolonged walks were his invariable remedy in his nervous crises, and he might have been successful

this time if, after having walked straight before him for some time, he had not come, about ten o'clock, to the corner of the Rue d'Antibes, the most animated and interesting part of Cannes.

At this hour the long corridor-like street was one mass of sharply outlined shadow, swept and freshened by one of those brisk breezes that impart a touch of crispness to the burning air of morning in Provence. The carriage wheels seemed to roll more rapidly, the horses' hoofs seemed to ring more resonantly upon the white roadway.

Young people were passing to and fro, English for the most part, attending with characteristic thoroughness to their after-breakfast constitutional or their before-lunch exercise. They walked along, overtaking or meeting young girls with whom they chatted gayly, having doubtless arranged the meeting upon the preceding evening. Others were hastening to the station to catch the train for Nice or Monte Carlo. Their manner, bearing, and costume bore that indescribable imprint of a frivolous life of amusement. Olivier was all the more deeply impressed by this from the mere fact that he had formerly been a leader in such an aimless mode of life.

Mornings such as this recurred to his mind. He remembered his life in Rome just two years before. Yes, the sky was of the same shade of blue, the same fresh breeze softened the sun's burning rays in the

streets. Carriages rolled along there with the same busy hurry, people walked about wearing the same unconcerned look of amused idleness. And he, Olivier, was one of those promenaders.

He remembered just such a morning when he had gone to meet Ely at some appointed place. He had bought some flowers in the Piazza di Spagna to brighten the room where he was to meet her.

Moved by that mechanical parody of will which remembrance sometimes calls into action, he entered a florist's in this Rue d'Antibes, which had recalled to him the Roman Corso for a moment. Roses, pinks, narcissus, anemones, mimosa, and violets were piled up in heaps on the counter. Everywhere was displayed the glorious prodigality of the soil which, from Hyères to San Remo, is nothing but a vast garden nestling upon the shores of the sea. The shop was filled with a sweet penetrating odor which resembled the perfumes that enveloped them in their hours of love long ago.

The young man carelessly selected a cluster of pinks. He came out again holding them in his hand. And the thought flashed into his mind: "I have no one to whom I can offer them!" As a contrast to this thought the image of his friend and Madame de Carlsberg recurred to him. The thought provoked another sentiment in addition to those of which he had been the prey for some sixteen hours. He felt the most instinctive, the most unreasoning jealousy. He shrugged his

shoulders and was just upon the point of flinging the pinks into the road when he thought, in a rush of the ironical self-analysis with which he often found relief for his weary heart: —

"It is your own doing, Georges Dandin," he thought. "I will offer the bouquet to my wife. It will give me an excuse for having gone out without saying good morning."

Berthe was seated before her desk, writing a letter in her long, characterless hand, upon a travelling pad, when he entered the salon of their little apartment at the hotel, to carry out his project of marital gallantry, — something very novel for him. Around the blotter a score of tiny knick-knacks were arranged — a travelling clock, portraits in leather frames, an address book, a note pad — all ready as though she had inhabited the room for several weeks, instead of several hours. She was dressed in a tailor-made costume which she had put on with the idea that her husband would certainly return to show her around Cannes. Then, as he was late, she began to reply to overdue correspondence with an apparent calmness that completely deceived Olivier.

She did not let him see the slightest sign of vexation or reproach when he came in. Her rigid features remained just as cold and fixed as before. The two young people had begun this life of distant politeness in the early weeks of their married life. Of all forms

of conjugal existence, this form is the most contrary to nature and the most exceptional in the beginning. The fact that a marriage has been a failure must be an accepted one before it is possible to realize that politeness is the sole remedy for incompatibility of temper. It, at any rate, reduces the difficulties of daily intercourse which is as intolerable when love is lacking as it is sweet and necessary in a happy marriage.

But even in the most inharmonious households this very politeness often conceals in one of the two persons displaying it all the violence of passion, kept in check because misunderstood. Was this the case with Madame du Prat, with this child of twenty-two, with this woman so completely mistress of herself that she seemed to be naturally indifferent? Did she suffer because of her husband without showing it? The future would show. For the moment she was a woman of the world travelling, tranquil in aspect, who held up her forehead for the kiss of her lord and master, without a complaint, without a shade of surprise, even when he began: —

"I am sorry I let the luncheon hour go by. I hope you did not wait for me. I have brought you these flowers in the hope that you will excuse me."

"They are very beautiful," replied Berthe, burying her face in the bouquet and inhaling its subtle perfume.

The brilliant reds of the large flowers, so warm and rich in hue, seemed to accentuate all the coldness of

her blond beauty. Her blue eyes had something metallic in their depth, something steely, as though they had never felt the softening influence of a tear. And yet, from the manner in which she revelled in the musky, pungent odor of the flowers offered her by her husband, it was easy to detect an almost emotional nervousness. But there was no trace of this in the tone with which she asked: —

"Have you been out without eating? — That is very foolish. — Has your headache disappeared? — You must have slept badly last night, for I heard you walking about."

"Yes; I had a little attack of insomnia," replied Olivier, "but it is nothing. The open air on such a beautiful morning has put me all right again. — Have you seen Hautefeuille?" he added.

"No," she replied dryly. "Where could I see him? I have not been out."

"And he has not asked after me?"

"Not that I know of."

"He is perhaps also unwell," continued Olivier. "If you don't mind, I will go and ask after him."

He left the salon before he had finished speaking. The young woman remained with her forehead resting upon her hand in the same attitude. Her cheeks were burning, and although she was not weeping, her heart was swollen with grief, and her breathing was agitated and hurried. She became another woman with Olivier

absent. Apart from him she could abandon herself completely to the strange sentiment that her husband inspired in her. She felt a sort of wounded and unrequited affection for him. Her feelings could not seek relief either in reproaches or in caresses. They were, therefore, in a constant state of mute irritation. Under such moral conditions Olivier's visibly partial affection for Pierre could not be very sympathetic to the young woman, particularly since their return to Cannes, which had delayed their return just at the moment she was longing to see her family again.

But there was another reason that caused her to detest this friendship. Like all young women who marry into a different circle from their own, she was mortally anxious about her husband's past. Olivier, in one of those half-confidences that even the most self-contained men fall into in the moment of candor following marriage, had allowed her to see that he had suffered a particularly cruel disillusion in the latter part of his bachelor life. Another half-confidence had enabled her to learn that this incident had taken place at Rome, and that the cause of it was a foreigner of noble birth.

Olivier had completely forgotten these two imprudent phrases, but Berthe treasured them in the recesses of her memory. She had even not been content to brood over the avowals; she had put them side by side, and had completed them by that species of mental mosaic work in which women excel, seizing a detail here, another

there, in the most insignificant conversation to add them to the story upon which they are at work. They make deductions in this way that the most scientific observers, the most wily detectives, cannot equal.

Olivier had not the least suspicion of this work going on in Berthe's mind. Still less did he suspect that she had discovered the first name of this unknown mistress, a name whose very singularity had helped to betray it. It happened in this way: When they were married he had destroyed a number of letters, thrown a lot of faded flowers into the fire with many a portrait. Then — it is the common story of those mental *autos da fé* — his hand had trembled in taking up some of these relics, relics of a troubled, unhappy youth, of his youth. And this had made him treasure a portrait of Madame de Carlsberg, in profile, so beautiful, so clear cut, so marvellously like the profile of some antique medallion that he could not bear to burn it. He slipped the portrait into an envelope, and, some one happening to call upon him at this moment, he placed the envelope in a large portfolio in which he carried his papers. Then he forgot all about it. He had never thought about the portrait until he was in Egypt. Again he decided to burn it, and again he could not bear to destroy it.

In the cosmopolitan society into which his diplomatic functions called him it is a frequent thing for women to give their photographs bearing their signatures to their friends, sometimes even to mere acquaintances.

Ely's name written at the foot of the photograph, therefore, signified nothing. Berthe would never find the portrait, or if she did all that he would need to do would be to speak of her as an acquaintance. He, therefore, returned the photograph to its hiding-place in the portfolio, and one day the improbable happened in the simplest way in the world. They were staying at Luxor. He happened to be away from the hotel for a short time. Berthe, who during the entire journey kept the accounts of their expenses with a natural and cultivated exactitude, was looking for a bill that her husband had paid, and, without thinking, opened the portfolio. There she found the photograph. But the second half of Olivier's reasoning was faulty. She never thought of questioning him upon the subject. The presence of the portrait among Olivier's papers, the regal and singular beauty of the woman's face, the strangely foreign name, the elegant toilet, the place where the photograph had been taken, — Rome, — all told the young wife that this was the mysterious rival who had taken up such a large place in her husband's past.

She thought about it continually. But she could not speak to Olivier without his thinking that she had spied upon him, that she had deliberately searched among his papers. And besides, what was there to ask him about? She divined all that she did not actually know. So she kept silent, her heart seared with this torturing and fatal curiosity.

Her knowledge was sufficient to make her think, when her husband went out the day before with the most intimate friend of his youth: "They are going to talk about her!" For who could be in Olivier's confidence if not Pierre Hautefeuille? Was any other reason necessary to explain her antipathy? She had noticed Olivier's agitation upon his return from the walk with his friend. And she had said to herself: "They have talked about her." In the night she had heard her husband walking restlessly about in his room, and she had thought: "He is thinking about her." And this was the reason why she remained, now that the door was again closed, alone, her brow resting upon her hand, motionless, with her heart beating as though it would burst, and hating with an intense hatred the friend who knew what she ignored. By dint of concentrated reflection, she had divined a part of the truth. It would have been better for her, better for Olivier, better for all, had she only known it all!

Olivier's heart was also beating rapidly when, after having knocked at Pierre's door, he heard the words, "Come in," spoken by the voice he knew so well and whose sound he had so longed to hear the night before upon this very staircase. Pierre was not yet out of bed, though it was eleven o'clock. He excused himself merrily.

"You see what Southern habits I have fallen into.

I shall soon be like one of the Kornows who stays here. Corancez called the other day and found him in bed at five o'clock in the afternoon. 'You know,' said Kornow, 'we are not early risers in Russia.'"

"You do well to take care of yourself," said Olivier, "seeing that you have been so ill."

He had spoken with some embarrassment and a little at random. How he wished his friend would tell him of his nocturnal promenade in reply! But no, a little crimson flush colored Pierre's cheek, and that was all. But it was sufficient to remove all doubt from Olivier's mind as to the reason of his midnight absence. His mind suddenly made a choice between the two alternatives imagined when he had found the room empty. The evidence was overpowering. Pierre had a mistress and he had gone to meet her. He saw the countenance, still so youthful, reposing upon the pillow and bearing the traces of a voluptuous lassitude imprinted upon it. The eyes were sunken, his face had that pallor that follows the excesses of a too exquisite passion, as though the blood were momentarily fatigued, and his lips were curved in a smile that was both languid and yet contented.

While chatting upon one thing and another, Olivier noted all these overwhelming indications. He suffered, almost physically, as he remarked them, and a pang of agonizing pain shot through his heart, a pain that almost wrung a cry from him, at the idea that the

caresses which had left Pierre weary, and still intoxicated, had been lavished upon him by Ely.

With the passionate anxiety of a trembling friendship, of an awakening jealousy, of a longing that refuses to be calmed, of a curiosity that will not slumber, he continued his implacable and silent reasoning. Yes, Pierre had a mistress. And this mistress was a society woman, and not free. The proof of this was the hour fixed for their meeting, in the precautions taken, and, above all, in the strange pride in his beloved secret that the lover had in the depths of his eyes. To meet her he must have had to go through a thicket in some garden. Upon his return, Pierre had flung his soft hat that he had worn during his promenade upon the drawers. Little twigs of shrubbery still remained on the brim, and a faint green line bore witness to a passage through foliage pushed on one side with the head. The young man had placed his jewellery near the hat, and lying in close proximity to the watch and keys and purse, was the ring that Olivier had already noticed, the two serpents interlaced, with emerald heads. Du Prat rose from his chair under the pretext of walking about the room, in reality to take up the ring. It fascinated him with an unhealthy, irresistible attraction. As he passed before the commode, he took up the ring, mechanically and without ceasing to talk, and turned it about in his hand for a second with an indifferent

air. He noticed an inscription engraved in tiny letters upon its inner surface. *Ora e sempre,* "Now and forever." It was a phrase that Prince Fregoso had used in speaking about Greek art, and, as a souvenir of their voyage to Genoa, Ely had had the idea of having the words engraved upon the love talisman she gave to Pierre upon their return. Olivier could not possibly divine the hidden meaning of this tender allusion to hours of ecstatic happiness. He laid down the ring again without any comment. But if any doubt had remained in his mind as to what was causing him such secret anxiety, it would have disappeared before his immediate relief. He found nothing in the ring to suggest, as he had expected, a present from Madame de Carlsberg. On the contrary, the words, in Italian, again suggested the idea that Pierre's mistress might just as easily be Madame Bonnacorsi as the Baroness Ely. He thought, "I am the horse galloping after its shadow once more." And, looking at his friend, who had again crimsoned under Olivier's brief scrutiny, he asked: —

"Is the Italian colony here very large?"

"I know the Marchesa Bonnacorsi and her brother, Navagero. — And I must admit the latter is a sort of Englishman much more English than all the Englishmen in Cannes!"

Hautefeuille reddened still more as he spoke of the Venetian. He guessed what association of ideas had

suggested Olivier's question so quickly after having toyed with the ring and after having undoubtedly read the inscription. His friend thought the souvenir was the gift of some Italian. And who could this be if not the Marchesa Andryana? Any one else would have hailed with satisfaction the error that turned his friend's watchful perspicacity in a wrong direction. Hautefeuille, however, was too sensitive not to be pained by a mistake that compromised an irreproachable woman, to whose marriage he had even been a witness.

His embarrassment, his crimson cheeks, a slight hesitation in his voice, were only so many signs to Olivier that he was upon the right path. He felt remorse at having yielded to an almost instinctive impulse. He was afraid he had wounded his friend and he wished to ask his pardon. But to ask pardon for an indiscretion is sometimes only to be more indiscreet. All that he could do, all that he did, was to make up a little for the impression his sarcasm upon the day before must have made upon Hautefeuille if he was in love with the Venetian. Navagero's Anglomania served him as a pretext to caricature in a few words a snob of the same order whom he had met in Rome and he then said, in conclusion: —

"I was in a vile temper yesterday, and I must have appeared somewhat prudish in my fit of sepia. — I have often been amused by the motley society one meets in

watering-places, and I have felt all the charm of the women from other countries! — I was younger then. — I remember even having been fond of Monte Carlo! — I am curious to see it again. Suppose we dine there to-day? It would amuse Berthe, and I don't think it would bore me."

He spoke truly. In such mental crises, purely imaginary, the first moments of relief are accompanied by a strange feeling of light-heartedness, which shows itself in an almost infantile gayety, often as unreasoning as the motives from which it springs. During the rest of the time until the train started for Nice Olivier astonished his wife and friend by the change in his temper and conversation, a change that was inexplicable for them. The *Ora e sempre* of the ring and its sentimentality; all his recollections of the simplicity, of the naïveté of Italians in love; the opulent beauty that Pierre had suggested in comparing Madame Bonnacorsi to a Veronese, — all gave him the idea that his friend was the lover of an indulgent and willing mistress, one who was both voluptuous and gentle. It pleased him to think of this happy passion. He felt as much satisfaction in contemplating it as he had suffered at the thought of the other possibility. And he believed in all good faith that his anxiety of the night before and of the morning had been solely prompted by his solicitude about Hautefeuille, and that his present content grew out of his reassured friendship.

A very simple incident shattered all this edifice of voluntary and involuntary illusions. At Golfe Juan Station, as Hautefeuille was leaning a little out of the window, a voice hailed him. Olivier recognized the indestructible accent of Corancez. The door opened and gave admittance to a lady, no other than the ex-Marchesa Bonnacorsi, escorted by the Southerner. When she saw that Pierre was not alone, Andryana could not help blushing to the roots of her beautiful blond hair, while Corancez, equal to every circumstance, always triumphant, beaming, smiling, performed the necessary introduction. The conjugal seducer had thought of everything, and before leaving for Genoa he had established a meeting-place in one of the villas at Golfe Juan in which to enjoy the prolongation of their secret honeymoon. Andryana had managed to cheat her brother's watchfulness and had gone to meet her husband upon the first day of his arrival. Her happiness began to give her the courage upon which the wily Southerner had counted to bring his enterprise to a successful conclusion, but he had not yet trained her to lie with grace. Hardly was she seated in the compartment when she said to Olivier and his wife, without waiting for any question: —

"I missed the last train, and as Monsieur de Corancez did the same, we decided to walk to Golfe Juan to take the next train instead of waiting wearily in the station at Cannes."

All the time she was speaking Olivier was looking at her little patent leather shoes and the hem of her dress, which gave such a palpable lie to her statement. There was not a speck of dust upon them and her alleged walking companion's gaiters had very evidently not taken more than fifty steps. The married plotters surprised Olivier's look. It completed the Italian's confusion and almost provoked a wild fit of laughter in Corancez, who said merrily: —

"Are you going to Monte Carlo? I will perhaps meet you there. Where shall you dine?"

"I don't know," replied Olivier, with a forbidding tone that was almost rude.

He did not speak another word while the train fled along the coast, flying through tunnel after tunnel. The Southerner, without taking any notice of his old comrade's very apparent bad temper, entered into a conversation with Madame du Prat, which he managed to make almost a friendly one.

"So this is the first time you have been to the gaming-rooms, madame? In that case I shall ask you to let me play as you think best, in case we meet in the rooms. — Good, here is another tunnel. — Do you know what the Americans call this bit of the railway? — Has Miss Marsh not told you, Marchesa? — No? — Well, they call it 'the flute,' because there are only a few holes up above from time to time. — Isn't it pretty? How did you like Egypt, madame? — They say Alexandria is

like Marseilles. — But the Marseillais would say they have no mistral. — Hautefeuille, you know my *cocher*, L'Ainé, as they call him? — About a couple of months ago at Cannes — one day when all the villas were rocking — he said to me: 'Do you like the South, Monsieur Marius?' — 'Yes,' I replied, 'if it were not for the wind.' '*Hé, pécheire!*' he cried, 'wind! Why, there is never any wind upon this coast, from Marseilles to Nice!' 'What is that?' I asked, pointing to one of the palms on the Croisette, which was so much bent upon one side that it was slipping into the sea. 'Do you call that the wind, Monsieur Marius?' he said; 'why, that is not wind — it is the mistral, which makes Provence so bright and cheerful!'"

"No, Corancez is the Italian's real lover," thought Olivier. He had only needed to see Hautefeuille with Andryana a couple of minutes to be quite convinced. She was certainly not the unknown mistress with whom the young man had passed part of the previous night.

The evident intimacy existing between her and the Southerner, their pleasure together, the too apparent falsehood she had told, the fascination Corancez's showiness had for her, as well as a host of indications, left no room for doubt.

"Yes," he repeated, "there is her lover. — They are worthy of each other. This beautiful, luxuriant woman, who might sell oranges on the Riva dei Schi-

avoni, is a fitting mate for this handsome chatterbox! Heavens! What an accurate observer he was who said: — 'Will you be quiet a minute, Bouches-du-Rhône?' — Just look how complacently Hautefeuille listens to him! He does not seem at all astonished at these people vaunting their adultery in a train side by side with a young married couple. How he has changed!"

With all his scepticism, Olivier was still a slave to current illogical prejudices. While he was young it had seemed the most natural thing in the world for him to carry on his intrigues under the shelter of pure-minded women who might happen to be friends or relatives of his mistresses. And yet he was astonished that Pierre was not shocked at the idea of Madame Bonnacorsi and Corancez installing themselves comfortably in the same compartment as Monsieur and Madame du Prat! But the principal portion of his reflections had to do with the painful deductions that had been interrupted for a few hours. "No," he thought, "this plump Italian and this mountebank from the South cannot interest him. — If he tolerates them at all, it is because they are in his secret; they represent an easy-going complicity, or they are simply people who know his mistress. — For I am sure he has one. Even though I did not know that he had passed the night away from his room, even had I not seen him in bed this morning, with sunken eyes and pallid complexion, even had I not held in my hands

his ring with its inscription, I should only have to look at him now. — He is another man!"

As he soliloquized in this way Olivier watched his friend intently, taking note of every movement with eager avidity, observing the very fluttering of his eyelids, of his respiration, as closely as a savage would note, analyze, and interpret the trampled grass, a footprint in the earth, a broken branch, a crumpled leaf upon the road taken by a fugitive.

He also noticed the weakening of the exclusively Gallic character in Pierre, which he had formerly liked. The young man had been in love with Ely only three months; it was only three weeks since he had learned that she loved him; but by dint of thinking of her all his associations of ideas, all his quotations, had been modified insensibly but strikingly. His conversation was tinged with an exotic quality. He referred to Italian and Austrian matters quite naturally. He who formerly astonished Olivier by his absolute lack of curiosity, now appeared to enjoy with the pleasure of the newly initiated the stories of the cosmopolitan society to which he was attached by secret but none the less living bonds. He had now an interest in it, was accustomed to it, sympathized with it. And yet nothing in his letters had prepared his friend for this metamorphosis.

Olivier continued to seek indications disclosing the identity of the woman he loved in his conversation,

in the expression on Pierre's face, in the least important words of the three speakers. Berthe, who had hardly deigned to reply to Corancez's attempts to interest her, now appeared absorbed in contemplation of the beautiful view across the sea. The afternoon was drawing to its close. The sheets of blue and violet water slumbered in the indented coast. The foam tossed about, appearing and disappearing around the big wooded promontories. And on the other side, shutting in the horizon, beyond the deep mountains, were outlined the white sierras of the snowclad peaks.

But the young woman's self-absorption was but in appearance. And if Olivier had not been too startled by the sound of a name suddenly mentioned he must have seen that the name also made a shudder run through his wife.

"Are you dining at the Villa Helmholtz to-morrow?" Madame Bonnacorsi asked Hautefeuille.

"I shall go later in the evening," he replied.

"Do you know whether the Baroness Ely is at Monte Carlo to-day?" asked Corancez.

"No," answered Hautefeuille; "she is dining with the Grand Duchess Vera."

Simple as was the sentence, his voice trembled as he spoke. It would have seemed to him both puerile and ignoble to attempt to hide anything from Olivier, and it was perfectly natural for Corancez, who knew of his relations with Madame de Carlsberg, to ask him

about such a trifling matter. But the gift of second sight seems to descend upon lovers. He felt that his friend was watching him with a singular expression in his eyes. And — more extraordinary still — his friend's young wife was also observing him. The knowledge of the tender secret he carried hidden in his heart, a sanctuary of adoration, made the glances so painful to support that insensibly his face disclosed his feelings just sufficiently to enable the two people spying upon him at the moment to find food in his momentary agitation for their thoughts.

"The Baroness Ely? — Why, that is the name on the portrait!" — How was it possible for Berthe to avoid the rapid reflection? And then she thought: "Can this woman be at Cannes? How embarrassed both Olivier and Pierre look!"

As for Olivier, he thought: "He knows all about her movements. — How naturally Corancez asked him about her! — That is just the tone such people adopt in speaking with you about a woman with whom you have a *liaison*. — And yet, is it possible there is such a *liaison?*"

Was it possible? The inner voice, stilled for a moment by the words engraved on the ring, again began to be heard. It replied that a *liaison* between Ely and Pierre was not only possible; it was probable; it was even certain. — And still the indisputable facts to support this feeling of certitude were far from

numerous. But others began to be gathered. In the first place, Pierre disclosed a secret to his friend in the name of Corancez, who had not been blind to the coldness of his old schoolfellow.

"You were not very pleased to see Corancez walk into our compartment. He felt it. Now admit it."

"That is one of the customs of this region," replied Olivier. "I simply think he might have spared me this association with my wife. All the better for him if Madame Bonnacorsi is his mistress, but for him to present her to us in the way he did is, I think, rather cool."

"She is not his mistress," replied Hautefeuille. "She is his wife. He has just asked me to tell you. I will explain all about it."

Pierre continued with the story, in a few hurried words, of the extraordinary secret marriage, of Navagero's tyranny over his sister, of the resolution the lovers had taken, of the departure of them all upon the yacht, and of the ceremony in the ancient Genoese palace. To make this disclosure he had seized the moment, in the vestibule of the restaurant, when Berthe was taking off her veil and cloak a few paces away, and while they themselves were handing their overcoats to the cloak-room attendant. It was the first minute they had had alone since the arrival of the train.

"But, with all that to do, you cannot have had

time to see Genoa?" said Olivier, as his wife approached.

"Oh, yes. The sea was so rough that we did not return until next day."

"They passed the night together there," thought Olivier. Even if they had passed it on the boat, his conclusion would have been the same. And then, just as though Fate were obstinately trying to dissipate his last lingering doubts, Hautefeuille stopped as they were traversing the restaurant to secure a table. Among the mingled crowd of diners Pierre saluted four people seated round a table more richly appointed than the others and embellished with rare flowers.

"Did you not recognize your former cotillon partner?" he asked Olivier, when he was once more with the Du Prats.

"Yvonne de Chésy? How little she has changed. —Yes, she is very young," replied Olivier.

Before him there was a large mirror, in which he saw reflected all the picturesque confusion of the fashionable restaurant. He could see the tables surrounded by women of the highest society and women of the most dubious, in gorgeous toilets and coquettish bonnets, elbowing each other, chatting to their companions, men who knew the women of both classes. The position in which he was placed gave him a view of Yvonne's profile. In front of her was her husband, no longer the dazzling, rattlebrained Chésy

of the *Jenny*, but a nervous, anxious, absent-minded creature, the exact type of the ruined player who amid the most brilliant surroundings is wondering whether or not he will leave the place to blow out his brains.

Between this poor being, visibly ill at ease, and the laughing young wife, who never dreamed of anything so tragic, was seated an individual of ignoble physiognomy, flabby-cheeked, with double chin, piercing, inquisitorial, brutal eyes set in a full-blooded countenance. He had the rosette of the Legion d'Honneur at his buttonhole, and he was paying manifest court to the young wife.

Between Yvonne and Chésy, a second woman was placed. At first Olivier could only see the back of her head. Then he noticed that this woman turned some three or four times to look toward their table at them. There was something so strange in the action of the unknown, the attention she paid to the group in which Hautefeuille and Olivier were was in such total contrast to the reserved expression on her face and to her quiet bearing, that Olivier had for a moment a flash of fresh hope. What if this woman, so pretty, so refined, with an expression that was so gentle and interesting, were Pierre's beloved mistress? As though absent-mindedly, he asked: —

"Who are the Chésys dining with? Who is the man with the decoration?"

"It is Brion, the financier," replied Hautefeuille. "The charming woman in front of him is his wife."

Again Olivier looked in the mirror. This time he surprised Madame Brion with her eyes evidently fixed upon him. His memory, so tenacious of all touching his sojourn in Rome, awoke and reminded him of the time he heard the name last, reminded him in a souvenir that brought back the name as pronounced by an unforgetable voice. He pictured himself again in a garden walk at the Villa Cœlimontana, talking to Ely about his friendship for Pierre and entering into a discussion with her such as they often had.

He declared that friendship, that pure, proud sentiment, that mixture of esteem and affection, of absolute confidence and sympathy, could not exist except between man and man. She averred that she had a friend upon whom she could depend just as he could upon Hautefeuille. And she had then spoken of Louise Brion. It was Ely's friend who was now dining a few feet away. And if she was regarding him with that singular persistence, it was because she knew.—What did she know?—Did she know that he had been Madame de Carlsberg's lover?—Without doubt that was it. Did she know that Pierre was her lover now?

This time the idea became such a violent, such an imperious obsession that Olivier felt he could no longer stand it. Besides, was there not a means close at hand of learning the truth, and that immediately?

Had not Corancez told them that he should finish the evening in the Casino? And he must certainly know, seeing that he had passed the winter with Hautefeuille and Madame de Carlsberg.

"I will ask him about it openly, frankly," said Olivier to himself. "Whether he replies or not, I shall be able to read what he knows in his eyes.— He is so stupid!"

Then he felt ashamed of such a proceeding, as though of a frightful indelicacy in regard to his friend.

"That is what comes of a woman stealing in between two men. They become vile at once!—No, I will not try to get the facts of the case from Corancez. And yet—"

Was Corancez stupid? It was impossible to be more mistaken about the wily Southerner. Unfortunately, he was at times too astute. And in the present case, his excessive subtlety made him commit the irreparable fault of definitely enlightening Olivier. For the scruples of this latter were, alas! powerless to withstand the temptation. After all he had thought, in spite of all he felt so clearly, he succumbed to the fatal desire to know. And when, about ten o'clock, he encountered Corancez in one of the rooms of the Casino, he asked him abruptly:—

"Is the Baroness Ely, of whom you spoke in the train, the Madame de Carlsberg I knew in Rome?— She was the wife of an Austrian archduke."

"The very same," responded Corancez, saying inwardly: "Hallo! Hautefeuille has not said anything. — Du Prat knew her in Rome? Heaven grant he has no feeling in that quarter, and that he will not go chattering to Pierre!"

Then, aloud, he said: —

"Why do you ask?"

"For no reason," replied Olivier.

There was a short silence. Then he said: —

"Is not my dear friend Hautefeuille somewhat in love with her?"

"Ah! Now for it," thought the Southerner. "He'll be sure to learn all about it sooner or later. It had better be sooner. It will prevent mistakes."

And he replied: —

"Is he in love with her? I saw it from the beginning. He simply worships her."

"And she?" asked Olivier.

"She?" echoed Corancez. "She is madly in love with him!"

And he congratulated himself upon his perspicacity, saying to himself: —

"At any rate, I feel more at ease now. Du Prat will not commit any folly."

For once the Southerner had not realized the irony of his own thoughts. He was as naïve as his secret wife, simple-minded Andryana, who, discovering Madame du Prat at one of the roulette tables, replied to

the questions of the young wife without noticing her trouble, answering with the most imprudent serenity.

"You were talking about a Baroness Ely in the train. — What an odd name!"

"It is a diminutive of Elizabeth, and is common enough in Austria."

"Then she is an Austrian?"

"What! You don't know her? It is Madame de Carlsberg, the morganatic wife of the Archduke Henry Francis. — You are sure to meet her in Cannes. And you will see for yourself how beautiful and good and sympathetic she is."

"Did she not live in Rome for some time?" continued the young wife.

How her heart beat as she asked the question! The Venetian replied in the most natural tone: —

"Yes, for a couple of winters. She was not on good terms with her husband then, and they lived according to their own guise. Things are a little better now, although — "

And the good creature was discreetly silent.

CHAPTER IX

FRIEND AND MISTRESS — *Continued*

The sentiment of perfect happiness that Ely experienced when she was convinced, in talking to Pierre, that Olivier had not disclosed anything to his friend did not continue long. She knew her former lover too well not to understand the constant danger threatening her. She knew that he still remembered her, and she realized the intensity of morbid passion of which the unhappy man was capable. It was impossible that he should not feel toward her now as in the past, that he should not judge her in the present as during the time of their *liaison*, with a savage cruelty allied to a suspicion that had so wounded her. She knew how dearly he loved Hautefeuille. She knew how solicitous, how jealous that friendship was. No, he would not suffer her to possess his beloved companion without a struggle, were it only to save him from her whom he judged so hardly.

Besides her tact, the intuition of the former mistress was not to be deceived. When the man whom she knew to suffer, as from a malady, from a sensu-

ality that was almost ferocious, should learn the truth, his worst, most hideous jealousy would be aroused into action. Had she not counted upon this very thing in the first place when she had nourished a scheme of vengeance that to-day filled her with shame?

All these ideas crowded into her mind immediately Hautefeuille left her. Again, as after his first visit, she accompanied him as far as the threshold of the hothouse, clasping his hand and leading him through the salon plunged in darkness, with a feeling of terror and yet of pride when she felt that the hand of the young man, indifferent to danger, never trembled. She shuddered at the first contact of the cold night air. A last embrace, their lips united in a yearning final kiss, the kiss of farewell,—always heartrending between lovers, for fate is treacherous and misfortune flies swiftly,—a few minutes during which she stood listening to his steps resounding as he walked down the deserted pathways of the garden, and then she returned to her room, returned to find the place, now cold, where her beloved had reposed in her solitary bed. In the sudden melancholy mood caused by separation her intelligence awoke from its vision of happiness and forgetfulness, awoke to a sense of reality. And she was afraid.

Here fear was intense, but short-lived. Ely descended from a line of warriors. She was capable of carrying out actively an energetic policy. She could

think out clearly a situation. Resourceful and proud natures like hers have no time for the feverish creations of an unsound imagination enfeebled by terror. She was one of those who dare to look upon approaching danger. Thus in the first flush of her dawning passion for Hautefeuille, as her confession to Madame Brion proved, she had foreseen with a clearness that was almost a certainty the struggle that would take place between her love and Olivier's friendship for Pierre.

But this power of courageous realization allows such natures to measure the danger once they are face to face with it. They lay bare, with the greatest clearness, the facts of the crisis through which they pass. They have the strength that comes from daring to hope, from having an exact idea of the danger in moments that appear desperate. Thus though Ely de Carlsberg was a victim to a return of her awful anxiety, after Hautefeuille's departure, when she again laid down her head upon the pillow, though she suffered from a disquietude that kept her awake, when she arose the following morning she again felt confidence in the future. She had hope!

She had hope, and for motives that she saw clearly, just as the General, her father, used to see a battlefield laid out in imagination definitely and accurately. She had hope, in the first place, in Du Prat's love for his wife. She had felt how refreshing to the

heart is the love of a young, pure nature innocent of the world. She had experienced it herself. She knew how the moral nature is restored, reformed, re-created, is purified by contact with the belief in the good, the magnanimity of generous impulses, the nobility of a broad charity. She knew how such an association washes away all shameful bitterness, all evil sentiment, all traces of vice. Olivier had married the girl of his choice. She loved him and he loved her. Why should he not have felt all the beneficent influence of youth and purity? And in that case where would he find the strength to wreck the happiness of a woman whom he had loved, whom he judged severely, but in whose sincerity he could not fail to believe?

Ely had this basis for her hope. She trusted in the truth of her passion for Pierre, in the evidence that would confront Olivier of his friend's happiness. She said to herself: "Once his first moment of suspicion is passed, he will begin to observe, to notice. He will see that with Pierre I have been free from any of the faults that he used to magnify into crimes, that I have been neither proud nor frivolous nor coquettish." — She had been so single-minded, so upright, so true in her love! Like all people possessed by a complete happiness, she thought it impossible for any one to misunderstand the truth of her heart.

Then, again, she trusted in the honor of both — in Pierre's, to begin with. Not only was she sure he

would not speak of her, she knew in addition that he would use all his strength to prevent his secret being suspected by even his most intimate friend. Then she trusted in Olivier. She knew him to be of a scrupulous delicacy in all things, to be careful in his speech, to be a perfect gentleman! He would certainly never speak. To utter the name of one who had once been his mistress when their relations had been conducted under certain unrevealed conditions would be an infraction of a tacit agreement, as sacred as his word of honor, would be to be disgraced in his own eyes. Olivier had too much self-respect to be guilty of such a fault, unless it were in a moment of maddening suffering. This condition was lacking in his case. He could never have this excuse under the circumstances in which he returned, married and happy, after an absence of months and months, almost two years! No, there could not arrive this crisis in his life now. And, above all, he would never cause his friend to suffer. — Besides — and this was the final motive upon which Ely's hopes were based, was the most solid of all, and only that proved how thoroughly she knew Olivier — if he spoke of her to Pierre it would place a woman between them, it would trouble the ideal serenity of their affection, which had never been dimmed by a cloud. Even should he lose his self-respect, Olivier would never lose his respect for his friendship.

It was in such thoughts that the unhappy woman sought relief upon the day following Olivier's arrival in Cannes. It was the very day that the young man's suspicions took bodily form, the day when all indications pointed to one thing only, accumulated around him and were condensed into absolute certainty by the well-meant but irreparable words spoken by Corancez!

Ely de Carlsberg hoped, and her reason confirmed her hopes. But that very same reason was to destroy, bit by bit, the ground for hoping in the week following Olivier's return. And this, also, without her once meeting him. She dreaded nothing so much as meeting him face to face, and yet she would have preferred an explanation, even a stormy one, to this total lack of intercourse. That they did not meet was evidently an intentional act upon the part of the young man, for it was an impoliteness that could not be accidental.

There was only one way left for Ely to learn the truth, the talks that she had with Hautefeuille. How her suffering was intensified, how her agony was increased! Only from Hautefeuille could she hear of Olivier during the week. Through Hautefeuille she followed the tragedy being enacted in the heart of her former lover. To Pierre it was quite natural to tell his dear confidante of all the anxiety that his friend caused him. He never dreamt that the least important detail was full of significance for her. In every

conversation with Pierre during the first eight days she descended deeper and deeper into the dangerous abyss of Olivier's thoughts. She saw a possible catastrophe approaching from the first,—a possible catastrophe that became a probability, even a certainty, at last.

The first blow to Ely's hope was dealt upon the day following the dinner at Monte Carlo, when she again saw Pierre, not this time in the quiet intimacy of a nocturnal meeting, but at the big soirée which had been spoken about in the train. It was late when he arrived. The salons were quite full, for it was nearly eleven o'clock.

"Olivier insisted upon keeping me," he said, excusing the lateness to Madame de Carlsberg. "I began to think he would never let me go."

"He wanted to keep you for himself," she replied; "it is so long since he saw you."

With a beating heart she waited to hear if Du Prat had manifested any repugnance when he knew that Pierre was coming to her house.

"You must not wound the susceptibility of an old friend."

"He is not susceptible," replied Pierre. "He knows well enough how attached I am to him. He kept me talking about his married life."

And, he added, sadly:—

"He is so unhappy! His wife is so badly suited to

him. She does not understand him He does not love her and she does not love him. — Ah! it is frightful!"

So the rejuvenation of Olivier's heart by the love of a girl, the sentimental renewal upon which his former mistress had counted, was only one of her illusions. The man was unhappy in the very marriage in which she would have liked to see a sure guarantee of forgetfulness, the effacing of both their pasts. The revelation was so full of menace to the future of her own happiness that she felt she must know more, and she kept Pierre in a corner of the little salon, questioning him. They were near the foot of the private staircase leading to her room. By one of those contrasts that re-vivify in two lovers the fiery sweetness of their secret this salon, traversed by them with peril, in complete obscurity, hand clasping hand, this little salon, witness of their secret meetings, was now blazing with light, and the crowd moving about gave, as it does to all the fêtes on the Riviera, the sensation of a worldly aristocracy.

It served as a passage between the brilliantly lighted hothouse and the rooms of the ground-floor, decorated with shrubs and flowers and overflowing with guests. The prettiest women in the American and English colonies were there, extravagantly displaying their wealth of jewels, talking and laughing aloud, with the splendid complexion that characterizes the race. And mingling with them were Russians and Italians

and Austrians, all looking alike at the first glance: all different at the second. The ostentatious elegance of toilets, all daringly bright-colored, spoke loudly of the preponderance of foreign taste.

Evening coats were sprinkled about among these women, worn by all the authentic princes in the wintering-place and also by the society men of the place. All the varieties of the kind were represented there. The most celebrated of sportsmen, renowned for his success as a pigeon shot, elbowed an explorer who had come to Provence in search of rest after five years spent in "Darkest Africa," and both were chatting with a Parisian novelist of the first rank, a Norman Hercules with a faunlike face, contented smile, and laughing eyes, who a few winters later was to die a death worse than death, was to see the wreck of his magnificent intellect.

This evening an air of gayety appeared to hang over the salons, lit by innumerable electric lamps and ventilated by the balmy breath of early spring. In a few more days this society would be dispersed to the four corners of the continent. Did the fête owe its animation to this sentiment of a season that was almost finished, to the approach of an adieu soon to be spoken?

In any case this spring seemed to have penetrated even as far as the master of the house — the Archduke Henry Francis — in person. It was his first appear-

ance in his wife's salon since the terrible day when he came there in search of Verdier to take him off almost by force to the laboratory. Those who had assisted at his cavalier entrance upon that occasion, and who were again present this evening, Madame de Chésy, for example, Madame Bonnacorsi, Madame Brion, who had come from Monte Carlo for two days, and Hautefeuille, were astounded by the change.

The tyrant was in one of his rare moments of good humor, when it was impossible to dislike him. He went about from group to group with a kindly word for all. In his quality of Emperor's nephew, and one who had almost ascended the throne, he had the princely gift of an infallible memory for faces. This enabled him to call by their names people who had been presented to him only once. And he joined to this quality another, one that disclosed him to be a man of superior calibre, an astonishing power of talking with each upon his special subject. To a Russian general, famous for having built at great peril a railroad through an Asiatic desert, he spoke of the Trans-Caspian plains with the knowledge of an engineer, coupled to a thorough familiarity with hydrography. He recited a verse from the Parisian novelist's first work, a volume of poems now too little known. With a diplomatist who had been for a long time in the United States he discussed the question of tariffs, and immediately afterward recommended the latest model

of gun, with all the knowledge of a maker, to the celebrated pigeon shot. He talked with Madame Bonnacorsi about her ancestors in Venice, like an archæologist from the St. Mark library; with Madame de Chésy about her costumes, like some habitué of the Opéra, and had a kindly and private word for Madame Brion about the Rodier firm and the rôle it was playing in an important Austrian loan.

This prodigious suppleness of intellect, assisted by such a technical memory, made him irresistibly seductive when he chose to be winning.

He had thus arrived, amid general fascination, at the last salon, when he saw his wife talking with Hautefeuille. At this sight, as though it were an additional pleasure to surprise Ely *tête-à-tête* with the young man, his blue eyes, which shone so brightly in his ruddy face, became even more brilliant still. Advancing toward the pair, who became silent when they saw him approaching, he said in an easy manner to the Baroness, the friendliness of the tone accentuating the irony of the words: —

"I do not see your friend Miss Marsh this evening. Is she not here?"

"She told me she would come," replied Madame de Carlsberg. "She is perhaps indisposed."

"Have you not seen her to-day?" asked the Prince.

"Yes, I saw her this morning. — Will Your Highness tell me why you ask the question?"

"Simply because I am deeply interested in everybody who interests you," replied the Archduke.

As he uttered the insolently mocking phrase, the eyes of the terrible man shot a glance at Hautefeuille that was so savage that he felt an almost magnetic thrill shoot through him. It was only a flash and then the Prince was in another group talking, this time about horses and the last Derby with the Anglomaniac Navagero, without paying any more attention to the two lovers, who separated after a couple of minutes, heavy with unuttered thoughts.

"I must go and speak to Andryana," said Madame de Carlsberg. "I know the Prince too well not to be sure that his good temper hides some cruel vengeance. He must have found some way of embroiling Florence with Verdier. — Good-by for the present. — And don't be cast down over the misery of your friend's married life. — I assure you there are worse."

As she spoke, she gently waved a big fan of white feathers. The perfume she preferred, the perfume that the young man associated with the sweetest emotions, was waved abroad by the feathers. She gently bowed as a sign of farewell, and her soft brown eyes closed with the tender look of intelligence that falls upon a lover's heart like an invisible kiss.

But at that moment Pierre was unable to feel its sweetness. Again he had experienced, in the presence of the Archduke, the pain that is one of the frightful

penalties of adultery; to see the beloved one ill-treated by the man who has the right because he is the husband, see it, and to be unable to defend her. He watched her going away now with the bearing of a beautiful, graceful queen, so proudly regal in her costume of pink moiré shot with silver. Upon the beloved visage which he saw in profile as she crossed the room, he discerned traces of profound melancholy, and again he pitied her with all his heart for the bitterness of her married life. He never dreamt that the Archduke's sarcasm left Madame de Carlsberg completely indifferent, nor that the relations of Miss Marsh and Verdier did not interest her sufficiently to cause such a complete feeling of depression. No. It was this idea that was weighing upon the mind of the young woman, that was lying upon her heart like lead in the midst of the fête: "Olivier is unhappily married! He is miserable. He has not gained that gentleness of heart that he would have done had he loved his wife. — He is still the same. — So he hates me yet. — It was enough for him to learn that Pierre was to pass the evening with me for him to try to prevent him from coming here. — And yet he does not know all. — When he does!"

And hoping against hope, she forced herself to think, to say, to repeat: "Well! When he does know he will see that I am sincere; that I have not made his friend unhappy; that I never will make him suffer."

It was also Pierre who awoke her from the second illusion that Olivier would be touched by the truth and purity of her love. Three days passed after the soirée, during which the young man did not see his mistress. Cruel as were these separations, Ely judged it wisest to prolong them during Du Prat's stay. She hoped to make up for it later; for she counted upon passing the long weeks of April and May at Cannes with Hautefeuille, weeks that were so mild, so covered with flowers, so lonely upon the coast and among the deserted gardens. The idea of making a voyage to Italy, where they could meet, as they had done at Genoa, in surroundings full of charm, also haunted her. The prospect of certain happiness, if she could escape from the danger menacing her, gave her strength to support the insupportable; an absence that contained all the possibilities of presence, the torture of so great a love, of being so near and yet not seeing each other.

It was the one way, she believed, of preventing suspicion from awakening in Olivier. After these three weary days of longing, she appointed a meeting with Pierre one afternoon in the garden of the Villa Ellenrock, which recalled to both an hour of exquisite happiness. While her carriage rolled toward the Cap d'Antibes, she looked out upon the foliage of the climbing roses, peering over the coping of the walls, the branches, already long and full of leaves, falling

under their heavy load, instead of standing out strong and boldly, and casting heavy, deep shadows. A conflagration of full-blown roses blazed upon the branches. At the foot of the silvery olive trees, a thick growth of young wheat covered the loose soil of the fields. All these were the visible signs that the year had passed from winter to springtide in the three weeks. And a shudder of melancholy shot through the young woman at the sight. It was as though she felt the time slipping away, bearing her happiness with it. In spite of a sky, daily warmer and of a softer azure; in spite of the blue sea, of the odors permeating the soft, balmy air; in spite of the fascination of the flowers, blooming all around, as she strolled down the alleys, still bordered with cinerarias, anemones, and pansies, she felt that her heart was not as light as when she had flown to the last rendezvous. She perceived Hautefeuille, in profile, awaiting her under the branches of the big pine, at the foot of which they had rested. She felt at the first glance that he was no longer the lover of that time, enraptured with an ecstatic, perfect joy, and without a hidden thought. It seemed as though a shade hovered before his eyes and enveloped his thoughts. It could not be that he was vexed with her. It could not be that his friend had revealed the dreaded secret. And yet Pierre was troubled about Olivier. He admitted it at once before Ely had time to question him.

"I cannot think," he said, "what has come between us. I have the strange impression that certain things in me irritate him, unnerve him, displease him. — He is vexed with me about trifles that he would not even have noticed formerly; as, for example, my friendship with Corancez. Would you believe it? He reproached me yesterday for having witnessed the ceremony at Genoa, as though it were a crime. — And all because we met poor Marius and his wife in the train at Golfe Juan yesterday!

"'Our nest is built there,' Corancez said to me, adding — these were his very words — that 'the bomb was going to explode,' meaning that Andryana was going to speak to her brother. — I told the story to Olivier to amuse him, and he flew into a temper, going so far as to talk of its being 'blackmail,' as though one could blackmail that abominable creature Navagero! — I replied to him, and he answered me. — You cannot imagine in what terms he spoke to me about myself, about the danger that I ran in frequenting the society of this place, of the unhappiness my change of tastes and ideas gave him. — He could not have talked more seriously had Cannes been tenanted by a gang of thieves who wished to enroll me in their ranks. — It is inexplicable, but the fact remains. He is pained, wounded, uneasy because I am happy here. Can you understand such madness in a friend whom I love so sincerely, who loves me so tenderly?"

"That is the very reason why you must not feel angry," replied Ely. "When one suffers, one is unjust. And he is unhappy in his married life. It is so hard to have made a mistake in that way."

She spoke in this way, prompted by a natural jealousy. Her passionate, ungovernable nature was too proud, too noble to employ the method of secretly poisoning the mind of husband or lover against friendships that are disliked, a method that wives and mistresses exercise with a sure and criminal knowledge. But to herself she said:—

"Olivier has discovered that Pierre loves some one. Does he suspect that it is I?"

The reply to the question was not a doubtful one. Ely had too often noticed, when in Rome, the next to infallible perspicacity displayed by Olivier in laying bare the hidden workings of the love intrigues going on all around them. Although she continued, in spite of all, to hope in his honor, she dreaded, with a terror that became daily more intense, the moment when she would acquire the certitude that he knew. These two beings began to draw closer together by means of Hautefeuille, began to measure each other's strength, to penetrate each other's minds, even before the inevitable shock precipitated them into open conflict.

Again it was Pierre who brought to his suffering mistress the proof for which she longed and which she feared.—It was the seventh night after Olivier's

arrival, and she was awaiting Pierre at half-past eleven, behind the open door of the hothouse. She had only seen him in the afternoon long enough to fix this nocturnal meeting which made her pulse throb as with a happy fever. The afternoon had been cloudy, heavy, stormy. And the opaque dome of clouds stretched over the sky hid every ray of moonlight, every twinkling star. Heavy lightning glowed upon the horizon at moments, lighting up the garden, disclosing everything to the eyes of the young woman who stooped forward to see the white alleys bordered with the bluish agaves, the lawns with their flowering shrubs, the green stems of the bamboos, a bunch of parasol pines with their red trunks whose dark foliage stood out for a moment in the sudden flash of light followed immediately by a darker, more impenetrable shadow. Was it nervousness caused by the approaching tempest, for a heavy gust of hot wind swept across the garden, announcing the advent of a hurricane, or was it remorse at the idea of exposing her friend to the violence of the storm when he parted from her, that made Ely already anxious, troubled, and unhappy? When she at last saw Hautefeuille, by the light of the cold and livid lightning, passing along the fringe of bamboos, her heart beat with anxiety.

"Heavens!" she said to him, "you ought not to have come upon such a night. — Listen."

Big drops of rain began to fall upon the glass of the

hothouse. Two formidable thunderclaps were heard in the distance. And now the drops of rain became more and more general, so that around the two lovers under the protecting dome of glass there was a continuous, sonorous rattle that almost drowned the sound of their voices.

"You see our good genius protects us," answered the young man, pressing her passionately to his heart, "since I got here just in time. — And, besides, I should have come through the tempest without noticing it. — I have been too unhappy this evening. I felt I must see you to comfort me, to help me."

"You look disturbed," she replied. And touching his face in the darkness with her soft, caressing hands, she added, her voice changing: "Your cheeks are burning and there are tears in your eyes. — What is the matter?"

"I will tell you presently," Pierre answered, "when I have been comforted by feeling that you are near me. — God! How I love you! How I love you!" he repeated with an intensity in which she discerned suffering.

Then, later, when they were both in the solitude of her room, he said: —

"I think Olivier is going mad. These last few days he has been even stranger than ever. — This evening, for example, he regarded me with a look that was so curious, so insistent, so penetrating, that

I feel positively uneasy. I have not reposed any confidence in him, and yet I had the impression that he read in me — not your name. — Ah! happily, not that — not that! — but how am I to explain it? — my impatience, my desire, my passion, my happiness, all my sensations? And I had a feeling that my sentiments filled him with horror. — Why? — Is he not unjust? Have I taken away from our friendship in loving you? I was very miserable about it. Finally at ten o'clock I bade good night to him and his wife. — A quarter of an hour later some one knocked at my door. It was Olivier. — He said, 'Would you mind coming for a walk? I feel that I cannot sleep until I have taken a stroll.' — I replied, 'I am sorry I cannot; I have some letters to write.' I had to find some excuse. He looked at me again with the same expression that he had had during dinner. — And all at once he began to laugh. I cannot describe his laugh to you. There was something so cruel in it, so frightfully insulting, so impossible to tolerate. He had not spoken a word, and yet I knew that he was laughing at my love. I stopped him, for I felt a sort of fury rising in me. I said, 'What are you laughing at?' — He replied, 'At a souvenir.' His face became perfectly pale. He stopped laughing just as brusquely as he had begun. I saw that he was going to burst into tears, and before I could ask him anything he had said 'Adieu' and gone out of the room."

There is a necessity for conflict in the natural, logical issue of certain situations, a necessity so inevitable that even those who feel they will be destroyed by it accept the struggle when it comes without seeking to avoid it. It is thus, in public life, that peoples go to war, and in private life rivals accept the duel with a passive fatalism that often contradicts their complete character. They recognize that they have been caught in the orbit of action of a power stronger than human will.

When Pierre Hautefeuille had left Ely that night, she felt very cruelly the impression that a struggle was inevitable and that it was not only a struggle with a man, but with destiny! As long as her lover remained near, her tense nerves dominated this impression, but when he had gone she gave herself up to its contemplation. Alone, without sufficient strength to go to her bed, she crouched, thoroughly unnerved, upon a sofa. She began to weep, a crisis that lasted indefinitely, as though she felt herself trapped, threatened, conquered in advance! Her last hope had just been shattered. She could no longer doubt, after the scene that Pierre had told her of, that Olivier knew all. Yes, he knew all. And his nervousness, his fits of anger, his laughter, his despair, proved only too clearly that he would not accept the situation, and that a tempest of ungovernable desires were unchained within him. Now that he had arrived at such a point of

exasperation and of knowledge, what was he going to do? In the first place, he would try to meet her again. She felt as certain of this as though he had been standing there before her laughing the cruel laugh that had wounded Hautefeuille's heart. In a few days — perhaps in a few hours — she would be in the presence of her mortal enemy, an enemy not only of herself but of her love. He would be there; she would see him, hear him moving, breathing, living! A shudder of horror ran through her frame at the idea. The thought that this man had once possessed her filled her with a kind of acute suffering that made her heart almost stop beating. The remembrance of caresses given and returned induced a feeling of nausea and crushed her with shameful distress. She had never felt so much as at this minute how her sincere, deep love had really changed her, had made of her another woman, a rejuvenated, forgiven, renewed creature! — But it could not be helped. She would accept, she would support the odious presence of her former lover. It would be the punishment for not having awaited her love of the present in perfect purity; for not having foreseen that one day she would meet Hautefeuille; for not having lived worthy of his love. She had arrived at that religion — she, the reasoner, the nihilist, atheist, had come to accept the mysticism of her happiness so natural to the woman truly in love, and which makes all previous

emotions not provoked by the loved one a sort of blasphemous sacrilege. She would expiate the blasphemy by supporting his odious presence. — Alas! Olivier would not be content with simply inflicting the horror of his presence on her. He would speak with her. What would he say? What would he want? What would he ask? — She did not deceive herself for a moment. The sentiments of this man as regarded herself had not changed. As Hautefeuille had told her of the incident in his room, she had again heard his laugh, cruel and agonizing and insulting, that she knew so well. And with this laugh had come back to her all the flood of jealous sensuality that had sullied her formerly to so great an extent that the traces were still to be seen. After he had outraged her, trampled her under foot, left her, after having placed the irreparable obstacle of marriage and desertion between them, she felt and understood this monstrous thing, one impossible in any other man, but quite natural in him, that Olivier loved her still. He loved her, if it can be called love to have for a woman that detestable mixture of passion and hatred which calls forth incessantly the cruelty of enjoyment, the ferocity of pleasure.

He loved her. His attitude toward her would have been inexplicable without this anomalous, hideous sentiment which had lived in him through all and in spite of all! And, at the same time, he treasured his friend

with that jealous, stormy, passionate friendship which was tearing his heart at this moment with unheard-of emotions and sufferings. To what extent might he not be led by the frenzy of such torture agonizing as a steel blade turned and re-turned in a wound? What could equal the pain of having loved, of still loving, a former mistress, — of loving her with such evil, sinister love, — and of knowing that that woman was the mistress of his best, his most tenderly beloved friend, of a brother by adoption, cherished more than a brother by blood?

As clearly as she saw the first rays of dawn piercing the curtains at the end of this night of terrified meditation, Ely saw these sentiments at work in Olivier's heart.

"He who sows the wind shall reap the tempest," says an Austrian proverb. When she wished to meet Hautefeuille, to make herself dear to him, she wanted to strike Du Prat in the tenderest, most vulnerable spot in his organization, to wound him through his friendship, to torture him through it, to avenge herself in this way. She had succeeded only too well! What blow was he going to strike in the rage of suffering now consuming him? She had changed so much since the moment she had conceived the project of cruel vengeance that she asked herself what she was to do, what path she was to take? What if she appealed to this man, made supplication to him,

sought to melt his mood? — Or would it be better to play with him, to cause him to think no *liaison* existed between her and Hautefeuille, for, after all, he had no proof. — Or better still, why not oppose a bold front, and when he dared to appear before her, drive him from her door, for he had no claim upon her. — Her pride revolted against the first, her nobility of character against the second, her reason against the third. In such a decisive crisis as the one through which the poor woman was passing, the mind calls instinctively upon all the most secret resources of nature, just as it collects, summons to the centre of the personality, all its hidden strength. Ely was remarkable by her need of truth and energy in the middle of a society that is refined to excess and composite to the verge of falsity. As she said to her confidante in the alleys of the Brions' garden, on that night that was so recent and seemed so distant, it was the truth in Hautefeuille's soul that had first of all attracted her, charmed her, seduced her. It was in order to live a true life, to feel true emotions, that she had entered the paths of this love, whose dangers she had foreseen. After having in thought taken up and laid down, accepted and rejected a score of projects, she finished by deciding within herself that she would trust to the simple truth in the redoubtable scene she felt was drawing near, thinking: —

"I will show him all my heart, just as it is, and he may trample on it if he can find the strength."

This was the policy that this woman, capable of any error but not of meanness or common calculation, arrived at after her wretched wakefulness. She did not find forgetfulness in it for a peril drawing near. But it gave her the courage that every human being feels in being completely, absolutely logical in thought, wish, and belief. She was not, therefore, as much surprised as she even expected when, about ten o'clock, she received a note that proved how accurately she had reasoned.

The letter was very short. But it was full of menace for her who read it in the same little salon where she had made up her mind to dismiss Pierre Hautefeuille, — a resolution that had been so weakly broken, and that had been prompted by the very terror of the catastrophe that the few lines announced: —

"MADAME — I shall have the honor of calling upon you to-day at two o'clock. May I hope that you will receive me? or if the hour does not suit you, that you will fix another? Let me assure you that your slightest wishes will always be commands for

"Yours respectfully,

"OLIVIER DU PRAT."

"Very well," she said, "I shall be at home this afternoon."

It was impossible for her to answer the letter in writing. Commonplace though it was, she could see that

Olivier had written it in a singular state of agitation and decision. Ely knew his handwriting, and she could see from the few lines that the pen had been clenched, almost crushed in his hand.

"It is war!" she said to herself. "So much the better. I shall know what to expect in a few hours."

But in spite of her native energy, in spite of the power of resistance that her passion gave her, the hours seemed so long to her. Her nerves became more tense, painfully and unceasingly, as she counted the minutes. She had given orders that she was not at home to any one except her dreaded visitor. It seemed that she must regain her strength in a final solitary retirement before engaging in the duel upon which the future of her happiness depended.

For this reason she could not completely hide her disappointment when about half-past one she saw Yvonne de Chésy, who had insisted upon being admitted, enter the salon. She had only to give one glance at the face of the pretty little frivolous Parisienne to see that a tragedy was being enacted in her life also, a life that seemed created only to enjoy perpetual happiness. The childish countenance of the young woman was marked by an expression of astounded suffering. Her eyes, usually so sparkling and laughing, had in their blue depths an expression of terror, of stupefaction, as though brought suddenly face to face with some horrible vision. Her gestures betrayed a strained ner-

vousness that was in strange contrast with her habitual gayety and butterfly frivolity.

Ely suddenly remembered Marsh's conversation on the boat. She at once guessed that Brion had begun his amorous blackmailing of the poor child. She reproached herself for her momentary impatience, and even with all her own anguish she welcomed the poor girl with all her accustomed grace. Yvonne stammered an excuse for her insistence.

"You were quite right in coming in," replied Ely; "you know that I am always at home for you.—But you are all upset. What is the matter?"

"Simply," replied Yvonne, "that I am lost unless I can find some one to help me.—Ah!" she continued, holding her face in her hands as though to shut out some dreadful nightmare, "when I think of all that has taken place since yesterday, I cannot help thinking that I am in a dream.—In the first place we are ruined, absolutely, irreparably ruined. I only heard of it twenty-four hours ago.—Poor Gontran did everything to keep me from learning the truth right to the end,—and I reproached him for gambling at Monte Carlo! Poor, dear fellow! He hoped that a lucky chance would give him a hundred or two hundred thousand francs, something of a capital with which to rebuild our fortune.—For he is going to work! He is determined to do something, no matter what.—If you only knew how good and courageous he is!—It is

only on my account he feels the misfortune. It was for me, to obtain everything for me, that he entered into too risky investments. He does not know how little I care for wealth. — I can live on next to nothing, I have already told him. — All I want is a little *couturière* whom I can direct to make my costumes according to my ideas; a little establishment at Passy in one of those tiny English houses; a hired carriage or a coupé for my visits and for going to the theatre, and I should be the happiest woman. I would go to the market in the morning, and I am sure I should have a better table than we have now. And I know I should be happy in such a life. — As a matter of fact, I was not born to be rich — happily!"

She sketched out this little programme that she thought so modest and which would have necessitated at the least 50,000 f. a year, with such a charming mixture of girlishness and courage that Madame de Carlsberg's heart ached. She took her by the hand and kissed her, saying: —

"I know your kind heart, Yvonne. — But I hope everything is not yet lost. — You have many friends, good ones, beginning with myself. — At first one is terrified, and then it is always discovered that the ruin is not as complete as was thought."

"This time it appears that the contrary is the case," said the young woman, shaking her head. "But it is precisely because I know you to be my friend," she

went on, "that I have come to see you this morning. The other evening the Archduke spoke to my husband of the difficulty he experienced in finding some upright superintendent to look after his estates in Transylvania. — And as the Prince was so pleasant to us that evening we thought —"

"That Chésy could become his superintendent," interrupted Ely, who could not keep back a smile at her friend's naïveté. "I wouldn't wish such a fate for my worst enemy. — If things are really at such a point that your husband has to seek a position, there is only one man who can help him."

As she spoke, she saw Yvonne's infantile visage, which had brightened for a moment under the influence of her bright welcome, become again overclouded, and her look betrayed a feeling of pain and disgust.

"Yes," went on Ely, "there is only one man, and it is Dickie Marsh."

"The Commodore!" said Madame de Chésy, with manifest astonishment.

Then, shaking her head again, with her mouth closed in a bitter smile, she added: —

"No, I know now too well the value of these men's friendships and the price they place upon their services. I have only been ruined a short time, and already some one," — she hesitated a second, — "yes, some one has offered me wealth. — Ah! dear Ely,"

— and she clasped her hands over her eyes, blushing with indignation, — "if I would become his mistress. You do not know, you cannot know, what a woman feels when she suddenly discovers that for months and months she has been tracked and waited for by a man whom she thought her friend, like an animal tracked by a hunter. — Every familiarity she has allowed, without thinking, because she saw no harm in it, the little coquettishness that she has innocently shown, the intimacy that she has not guarded against, all return to her with shame, with sickening shame. The vile cleverness that was hidden under the comedy of friendliness she has not seen, and now it is as clear as daylight. She has not been culpable, and yet it seems as though she had been. I will never suffer another such affront! Marsh would make me the same ignoble proposition that the other did. — Oh! it is horrible, shameful!"

She had spoken no name. But by her trembling, by her look of outraged innocence, Madame de Carlsberg could imagine the scene that had taken place, that very morning, perhaps, between the good, if imprudent, creature and Brion, vile and despicable as he was. She understood for the second time that the Parisienne was really pure and innocent and that she was being initiated in the brutalities of life. There was something pathetic, something that was heartbreaking, in her remorse, her scruples, the sudden re-

vulsion of a soul that had remained naïve by irrealism.

Threatened though she was by another man, Ely felt her soul go out toward the unhappy child. She determined to speak to her about Marsh, to tell her of the conversation on the yacht, of the promise made by the American, when, with that acuity of the senses that is awakened by our inquietude at certain moments, she heard the door of the outer salon open.

"It is Olivier," she said to herself.

At the same time, with instinctive superstition, she looked at the still trembling Yvonne and added mentally: —

"I will help her. Such an action will surely bring me good luck."

Turning away, she said: —

"Do not be alarmed. I cannot speak to you just now, as I am expecting some one. But come again to-morrow afternoon and I promise you I will have found the very thing you want for Gontran. Let me act as I think best, — and, above all, no weakness! — No one must suspect anything. — You must never let people know that you suffer!"

The heroic counsel was addressed to herself. And she illustrated the remark at the same moment, for the footman opened the door and announced Monsieur Olivier du Prat. Madame de Chésy could never have guessed, to see Ely so calm, with such a welcoming smile, what

Hautefeuille's mistress felt as she saw the newcomer enter the little salon. Olivier, not less calm and polite than the two women, excused himself for not having called sooner.

"You are forgiven," said Yvonne, who had risen upon Olivier's entrance and had remained standing. "Really, if the society round had to be gone through on one's wedding journey, it would not be worth while having a honeymoon.—Make yours last as long as you can! That is the advice your old cotillon partner gives you—and excuse me for running away. Gontran was to come and meet me, and I don't want to miss him."

Then, turning to Ely, with a parting kiss, she said, in a whisper:—

"Are you satisfied with me?"

And the courageous little woman went off with a smile that her friend had hardly strength enough to return. Olivier's first glance had been a terrible trial to support for Madame de Carlsberg. She read in it so distinctly that brutality of a physical souvenir so intolerable for a woman after the breaking off of an intrigue, so intolerable, in fact, that they often prefer the scandal of an open rupture rather than undergo the torture of meeting a man whose eyes say plainly: "Go on with your comedy, my dear friend! Receive everybody's adulation, respect, affection! I know you, and nothing you understand, nothing can efface that souvenir."

In love, as she was, still glowing with the memory of Hautefeuille's caresses of the past night, Ely's soul was so wrung by this impression that she could have shrieked had she dared. She had only one idea, to cut his visit short. She felt that if it was prolonged to any extent she should faint before the end. But, suffering torture though she was, terrified to the verge of unconsciousness, she was still the woman of the world, the semi-princess, one who preserves her dignity in the midst of the most cruel explanations. And she had all the grace of a queen as she said to the man who had once been her lover and whom she so much dreaded: —

"You wished to see me? I might have refused to receive you, for I have that right. But I would not exercise it. — Still, I beg you to remember that this interview is hideously painful to me. Whatever you have to tell me, say it without a word that can increase my suffering, if it is possible. — You see, I have neither hostility, bitterness, nor distrust for you. Spare me any insinuations, any sarcasm, any cruelty. — It is all I ask, and it is my right."

She spoke with a simple dignity that astonished Olivier. He no longer noticed the air of defiance that formerly used to exasperate him with her. From the moment he entered the salon he had been struck by a change in the character of her beauty. Her countenance was always the same, with its noble, pure out-

line, with its delicate and proud features, lit up by those fathomless eyes, so charming with their touching languorousness. But there was no longer that mobile curious expression, that look of unquiet yearning there used to be imprinted on it.

This sensation was, however, too vague to impress her old lover, to change his hostility into tenderness. He had brooded over one idea too intensely during the last week, and an anger that was hardly restrained betrayed itself in his voice as he replied: —

"I will try to obey you, madame! Still, in order that the interview that I asked for may be understood, I shall have to say some things that you might perhaps wish unspoken."

"Say them," she said, interrupting him. "All that I ask is that you should not add anything that is not distinctly necessary."

"I will be very brief," said Olivier.

There was a moment's silence. Then, in a still more bitter tone, he said: —

"Do you remember about two years ago in Rome, at the Palazzo Savorelli, — you see I am being exact, — a young man being presented to you, a young man who did not even think about you, and with whom you were — How can I describe it without wounding you?"

"Say at once that I coquetted with him," Ely again interrupted, "and that I tried to make him love me. It is the truth."

"Since you have such a good memory," went on Olivier, "you surely recollect that these coquetries went so far that the young man became your lover."

What a shudder of horror shot through Ely, making her eyelids tremble with pain, as he accentuated the word with the cruelty that she had prayed him to spare her!

He continued remorselessly: —

"You remember also that this love was a very miserable one. The man was sensitive, suspicious, jealous. He had suffered very much in his life. A woman who loved him truly would have had but one thought, — to lull to slumber the horrible malady of distrust that raged in him. You did just the opposite. Close your eyes and look back in memory to a certain ball at the Countess Steno's, and that young man in the corner of the salon and you dancing — with whom?"

This allusion to a forgotten episode of the saddest part of their past brought a wave of blood to Ely's cheeks. She saw again, as her implacable questioner had asked her, one of the Princes Pietrapertosa paying his court to her. He was one of the imaginary rivals that Olivier had detested the most.

She replied · —

"I know. I acted wrongly."

"You admit it," went on Du Prat, "and you will also admit that the young man with whom you played

so cruelly had the right to judge you as he did, to leave you as he did, because when near you he felt all his worst impulses rise to the surface, because you made him evil, cruel, through his suffering. Is that also the truth?—And is it not also true that your pride was wounded by his desertion and that you determined to be revenged? — Will you deny that, having encountered later the most intimate, the dearest friend of that man, the deepest and most complete affection that had ever entered his life, you conceived a horrible idea? Will you deny that you determined to make his friend love you with the hope, the certainty, that he would learn, sooner or later, and would suffer horribly from the knowledge that his former mistress had become the mistress of his best, his only friend? Do you deny it?"

"No. It is true," she replied.

This time her beautiful face became livid. Her pallor, her aching head bowed as though under the weight of the blows it received, the fixed look in her eyes, her half-open mouth gasping for breath, the humble character of her replies, which proved how sincere she was in her firm resolve to not offer any defence of her action, ought to have disarmed Olivier.

But as he uttered the words "to the mistress of his friend" the image again rose before his eyes, the vision that had tortured him from the moment he had suspected the truth. He again saw Hautefeuille's face close to her

lovely countenance, his eyes looking into hers, his lips pressed upon hers. Ely's avowal only increased the tangibility of the vision. It completed his madness. He had never thought he loved her so well, that he had such a desire for the woman he had treated so brutally. His passion took complete possession of him.

"And you admit it!" he cried; "calmly, frankly, you admit it? You do not see how infamous, how abominable, monstrous your vengeance is? Think of it; you take a being such as he is, pure, youthful, delicate, one incapable of distrust, one all simplicity, all innocence, and you make him love you at the risk of destroying him, of ruining his soul forever.—And for what?—To satisfy the miserable spite of a flirt angry at being deserted.—Even his freshness and nobility of soul did not make you hesitate. Did you never think that to deceive such a defenceless creature was infamous? Did you never think of what you were destroying in his soul? Knowing as you did the friendship that bound him to me, if there had been a spark of—I will not say nobility—a spark of humanity in your heart, you must have recoiled from this crime, from the loathsome infamy of soiling, of ravishing him from his noble, beautiful affection, to give him in exchange a frivolous *liaison* of a few days, just long enough for you to find amusement in the vileness of your caprice!—He had done nothing to you! He had not deserted you! He had not married another!—Oh, God! What a cowardly, loathsome vengeance.—

But at any rate I cry in your face that it was cowardly, cowardly, cowardly!"

Ely sprang to her feet as her implacable enemy flung the insulting words in her face. Her eyes were fixed on Olivier with a regard in which there was no anger or revulsion of feeling under his affront. Her eyes even seemed to have an expression of calmness in their sincerity. She took a few steps toward the young man and put her hand on his arm — the arm that menaced her — with a gesture so gentle, and at the same time so firm, that Olivier stopped speaking. And she began to reply to him in a tone of voice that he did not recognize. It was so simple, so human, that it was impossible to doubt the sincerity of her words. Her heart was really disclosed before him. He felt that her words penetrated to the very centre of his inner nature. He loved this woman more than he knew himself. He had sought, without being able to create it, to call into being exactly what he now saw in the woman whose beauty he idolized. The soul that he saw shining through her tender, sad eyes, the passionate, shy, ardent soul, capable of the greatest, the most complete, sacrifice to love, was what he had divined to exist in her, what he had pursued without ever capturing, what he had longed for and had never possessed in spite of all their caresses, of all the violence and brutality of his jealousy! Her real nature had been awakened by another! And that other was his dearest friend! — He listened to Ely, for she was now speaking.

"You are unjust, Olivier," she said, "very unjust. But you do not know all — you cannot know. — You saw that I did not try to contradict you when you reproached me, that I did not try to brave it out. I was not the proud woman with whom you fought so often in years gone by. — I seem to have no pride left! How could I have when I see, as I listen to you, what I was, what I should be still had I not met Pierre, and without the love that has taken possession of my soul like an honored guest? — When I told you that I at first thought only of making him love me to avenge myself upon you, I told you the truth. You ought to believe me when I tell you that the mere idea now fills me with the same horror that you feel. — When I got to know him, when I realized the beauty, the nobility, the purity of his nature, all the virtues that you have just been speaking of, I awoke to the sense of the infamy I was going to commit. You are quite right, I should have been a monster if I had been able to deceive a soul so youthful, so innocent, so lovable, so true! But I have not been such a monster. — I had not talked with Pierre more than twice when I had utterly renounced all idea of such a frightful revenge, when he had won my love entire. I loved him! I love him! — Do you think that I have not said, that I do not say every day, every hour, to myself all that you have just spoken? Do you think I have not felt it ever since I knew what my sentiments were for him? I loved him, and he was your friend, your

brother. I have been your mistress, and I knew that a time must come when you would meet again, when he would speak to you of me — a time when he would perhaps know all. Do you think I did not dread that a time would come when I should see you again and you would speak to me as you have just been speaking? — Oh, it is horrible, agonizing!"

She dropped Olivier's arm and pressed her clenched hands upon her eyes with a movement of physical anguish. It was in her being that she suffered, in the body once abandoned completely to the man who heard her, as she continued: —

"But pardon me. I do not concern you. It is not what I have suffered that we have to think of, but of him. — You cannot doubt now that I love him with all there is in me that is noble, good, and true. You also must have realized how he loves me with all the wealth of affection that you know so well. All this week while he was speaking to me I saw you — with what agony! — I felt that you were laying bare our secret hour by hour. — Now you know that secret. Pierre loves me as I love him, with an absolute, unique, passionate love. — And now, if you choose, go and tell him that I was once your mistress. I will not defend myself any more than I did a few minutes ago. I have not strength enough to lie to him. The day he asks me, 'Is it true that Olivier has been your lover?' I shall reply, 'It is true!' — But it is not I alone whom you will have killed!"

She ceased speaking, and fell into her chair with her head resting on the back, as though exhausted by the effort of laying bare her thoughts, in which were mingled so many sad and bitter memories. She waited Olivier's reply with an anxiety so intense that her strength seemed to be ebbing away, and she closed her eyes as in dread. With the logic of a woman deeply in love, she had forced the man who had come there to threaten and insult her into a position where he must take one of the two courses that their wretched situation left open to him, — either to tell all to Hautefeuille, who would then decide for himself whether he loved Ely enough to trust her after he knew that she had been his friend's mistress; or, to spare him this torture, to leave Hautefeuille in ignorance with his happiness. In this latter case Olivier would have to go away, to put an end forever to his own misery, and to cease inflicting the pain of his presence upon Ely, a pain that, in itself, was the cause of a nervous state sufficient to reveal sooner or later their past relations.

What would he do? He did not reply; he, who only a few minutes before had been so eager to speak, so bitter in his reproaches. Through her half-closed eyes, quivering with the intensity of her anxiety to know the worst, Ely saw that he was regarding her with a strange, impassioned look. A struggle was going on within him. What was its cause? What

would be its result? She was about to learn, and also what sort of a sentiment her heartbreaking appeal had awakened in the heart that had never been able to tear itself away from her entirely.

"You love him?" he said at last. "You love him? — But, why do I ask? I know you love him. I feel it, I see it. — It is only love that could have prompted such words — could have imprinted such an accent, such truth upon them. — Oh!" he went on bitterly, "if you had only been, when we were in Rome, what you are now; if only once I had felt that you vibrated with genuine emotion! — But you did not love me and you love him!" He repeated, "You love him! — I thought we had inflicted upon each other all the pain that is in a human being's power, and that I could never suffer any more than I did in Rome, than I have done during these past days when I felt that you were his mistress. — But beside this — that you love him — my sufferings were nothing. — And yet how could you help loving him? — How was it that I did not understand at once that you would be touched, penetrated, changed; that your heart would be imbued with the charm of his grace, of his youth, of his delicacy, of all that makes him what he is? — Ah! I see you now as I longed to see you once, as I despaired of ever seeing you, and it is through him, it is for him!"

Then, with a moan as of some stricken animal, he cried: —

"No! I cannot support it. I suffer too much, I suffer too much!"

And words of grief, mingled with words of rage and love, poured forth in a wild stream.

"Since you hate me enough to have thought of such a brutal vengeance," he cried, cruelly, savagely, "since you longed to make me jealous of him through you, enjoy your work. — Look at it. — You have succeeded."

"Spare me, spare me!" cried Ely. "Oh, God! do not talk like that!"

His sudden outburst, the strange betrayal of his feelings, even in her suffering, made her shudder. With a mingled feeling of indescribable terror and pity she had a glimpse into another secret recess in the heart of the tortured being who, during a half hour of mortal anguish, had insulted, humiliated, despised, then had understood, accepted, justified, pitied, and who now cursed her. She had felt, as she listened to Pierre's confideuces on the subject of his friend, that a reflux of loathing sensuality still seethed in her former lover's heart. She saw it now. And she also saw that a deep, true passion had always lived, palpitated, germinated under his sensuality, under his hate. His passion had never developed, grown, put forth its blossom, because she had never been the woman he sought, the woman he yearned for, the woman he felt was in her. Thanks to the miracle worked by love for another, she had now become the

woman he desired. What a martyrdom of suffering for the unhappy man! Forgetting her fears and inspired only by a movement of compassion, she said: —

"What! rejoice in your grief? — Think of my vengeance yet. Did you not feel how sincere I was, what shame I feel at ever having conceived such a hideous idea? Did you not see how bitterly I loathe, how I regret my life at Rome? Do you not feel that my heart bleeds at the sight of your suffering?"

"I am very grateful for your pity," interrupted Olivier.

His voice suddenly became dry and cold. Was he trying to recover his dignity? Was he wounded by her womanly pity, a pity that is humiliating when given in place of love? Was he afraid of saying too much, of feeling too deeply if the interview was prolonged?

"I beg your pardon for not having kept my nerves under better control. — There is nothing more to say. I promise you one thing: I will do everything in my power to keep Pierre from ever knowing. Don't thank me. I will keep silent on his account, on my own account, so as to preserve a friendship that has always been dear to me, that always will be dear. I did not come here to threaten you that I would disclose the past to him. I came to ask you to be silent, to not push your vengeance to its last extreme.

— And now, as I bid you farewell forever, I still ask you that. You love Pierre, he loves you; promise me that you will never use his love against our friendship, to respect that feeling in his heart."

There was a supplicating humility in Olivier's voice. All the religious sentiment of his friendship, which Ely knew filled him, betrayed itself in his tone, sadly, almost solemnly! And with a solemn emotion she replied: —

"I promise you."

"Thank you again," he said, "and farewell."

"Farewell," she replied.

He took a few steps toward the door. Then he turned and approached her. This time she read in his eyes all the maddening vertigo of love and desire. She was seized with such a terror that she could not move. When he arrived at her chair, he took her head between his hands and frantically, passionately pressed it to his heart. He covered her brow, her hair, her eyes with kisses, and strove to kiss her lips with a mad frenzy that restored the woman all her strength. Thrusting him from her with all the vigor that her indignation gave her, she rose and took refuge in the corner of the salon, crying, as though appealing for help to the being who had the right to defend her: —

"Pierre! Pierre! Pierre!"

As he heard the name of his friend, Olivier seized

a chair as though he were about to faint. And suddenly, without looking at Ely, who was crouching against the wall almost swooning, with her hand pressed upon her heart, without saying a single word either of adieu or to ask pardon, he left the salon.

She heard him traverse the bigger room and heard the second door close. He went away with the terrified air of a man who had almost succumbed to the temptation to crime and who flees from himself and his loathsome desire. He passed, without seeing them, the two footmen in the vestibule, who had to run after him with his cane and overcoat. He went along one of the alleys in the garden without knowing it. The rush of emotion that had flung him upon his former mistress, now the mistress of his dearest friend, now gave way to such a flood of remorse, he was so tossed about on the sea of conflicting emotions caused by the kisses pressed upon the face he had longed for so secretly, with such intensity, during the past few days, by the sensation of her lips seeking to avoid contact with his own, of the beloved figure thrusting him away with repulsion and horror, that he felt his reason was giving way.

All at once, as he turned round the corner of the railing surrounding the villa, he saw that some one was awaiting him in a carriage. The sight arrested him with the same ghastly terror he would have felt at seeing the spectre of some one he believed dead and resting in the bosom of the earth. It was the

avenger whom Ely had called to her aid. It was Hautefeuille!

"Olivier!"

It was all he said. But his voice, his deadly pallor, his eyes, in which shone the suffering of a heart-breaking anguish, told his friend that he knew all.

CHAPTER X

A VOW

THE most extraordinary results are always brought about by the simplest causes, just as the most unexpected things are always logical happenings. A little reflection would oftener than not have been sufficient to prevent the one and to foresee the other. But the characteristic of passion is that its object absorbs its attention completely. It takes no note of the fact that other passions exist outside itself, as furious as itself, as uncontrollable with which it must come in contact. It is a train flying along under full steam, with no signal to warn it that another train is coming in the opposite direction on the same line.

Swept away by a torrent of suffering, wrapped up in his thoughts during this week of mortal agony, Olivier had not noticed that there was a being near him living, trembling, suffering also. Monomania is full of such egoism, of such forgetfulness. He had not noticed the working of his wife's mind, nor foreseen the natural possibility that, exasperated by her suspicions, Berthe might appeal to her husband's

friend for help, that she might implore Hautefeuille to aid her! This was just what she finally did, and the interview between them had as result one easy to prognosticate — that the young wife's jealousy tore off the bandage that covered the eyes of her husband's unwitting friend. In one minute Pierre understood everything!

This tragedy — such an interview was one, and one that was big with a terrible dénouement — was brought about by a last mad imprudence on Olivier's part. The eve of his meeting with Madame de Carlsberg he had manifested a more than usually feverish agitation. Not one of the indications of this state of mind had escaped his wife's notice. He had walked about in his room almost all the night, sitting down at intervals to try and write the letter he was going to send to Ely in the morning. Through the thin dividing partition of the room Berthe, awake and her senses acutely tense, heard him walk, sit down, rise, sit down again, crumpling up and tearing papers, walk about again, crush up and tear other paper. She knew that he was writing. "To her," she thought. Ah! how she longed to go, to open the door, which was not even locked, to enter the room, and to know if the anxiety that had consumed her during the last week was well founded or not, to learn if Olivier had really met again the mistress he had known in Rome, to discover if this woman was the cause of the agitated

crisis he was going through, if, yes or no, that former mistress was the Baroness Ely she had so much longed to meet in one of the salons at Cannes.

But, without her being able to say anything, her husband arranged something for every day, and they had not paid a single visit or dined a single time with any of their friends. She was too intelligent not to have understood at once that Olivier did not wish to mix with the society of Cannes, and that he would not, on the other hand, go away from the town. Why? A single premiss would have enabled Berthe to solve the enigma, but she had not that premiss. Her wifely instinct, however, was not to be deceived — there was a mystery. With an infallible certainty all pointed to this fact.

By dint of thinking and observing, she came to this conclusion: "This woman is here. He regrets her, and yet is afraid of her. — He longs for her, and that is why we remain here and why he is so unhappy. — He is afraid of her, and that is why he will not let me mix in society here."

How many times during the week she had been tempted to tell him that such a situation was too humiliating, that he must choose between his wife and his former mistress, that she had determined to go away, to return to Paris, to be once more at home among her own people!

And then Hautefeuille was there, always making a

third; Hautefeuille, who certainly knew all the truth! She hated him all the more in proportion as she suffered from her helpless ignorance. When alone with Olivier an invincible timidity prostrated her. She had a shamed terror of owning that she had discovered the name of the Baroness Ely. She dreaded having to own she had seen the portrait, as though she had been guilty of some vile spying. She trembled with fear lest some irreparable word should be spoken in the explanation that must follow. The unknown in her husband's character terrified her. She had often heard the histories of households broken up forever during the first year of married life. Suppose he should abandon her, return to the other in a fit of rage? The poor child felt her heart grow cold at the mere idea.

She loved Olivier! And even without any question of love, how could she accept the idea of seeing her conjugal happiness wrecked with the scandal of a separation, she so calm, so reasonable, so truly pure and simple-minded?

Again during the miserable night preceding Olivier's meeting with Ely she had listened to the restlessness of her husband and had kept silent, in spite of her suffering, of her sense of desertion, of her jealousy! Every footstep in the adjoining room made her pray, made her long for strength to resist the temptation to have finished forever with all her suffering. A dozen

times she compelled herself to begin the comforting prayer, "Our Father —" and every time when she arrived at the sentence, "As we forgive them that have trespassed against us," her entire being had revolted.

"Forgive that woman? Never! never! I cannot."

An almost insignificant detail — are there any insignificant details in such crises? — completed the tension of her nerves. Toward nine o'clock her husband, ready dressed for going out, entered her room. He had a letter in his hand slipped between his gloves and his hat. Berthe could not read the address on the envelope, but she saw that it bore no stamp. With her heart beating wildly with expectation of the reply he would make to the simple question, she said to her husband: —

"Do you want a stamp? — You will find one in my writing case on the table."

"No, thank you," replied Olivier. "It is simply a line to be delivered by hand. I will leave it myself."

He went out, adding that he would be back for luncheon. He never dreamed that his wife burst into a passion of weeping the moment she was alone. She was now certain the letter was for the Baroness Ely. Then, like every jealous woman, she gave way to the irresistible, savage instinct of material research which mitigates nothing, satisfies nothing — for, suppose a proof of the justice of suspicion is discovered,

does that make the jealous suffering inspired by that suspicion any easier to bear?

She went into her husband's room. In the waste-paper basket she saw the fragments of a score of letters, thrown there by the feverish hand of the young man. They were the drafts of the letters she had heard him begin and crumple up and destroy the night before. With trembling hands and burning cheeks, her throat parched with the horror of what she was doing, she gathered together and rearranged. She thus reconstituted the beginnings of a score of letters, letters of the most utter insignificance to any one unaided by the intuition of wounded love, but terribly, frightfully clear and precise to her.

They were all addressed to a woman. Berthe could read the incoherence of Olivier's thoughts in them. The entire gamut of sentiment was gone through, by turn ceremonious: "Madame, will you allow a visitor who has not yet had the honor;" ironical, "You will not be surprised, madame, that I cannot leave Cannes;" familiar, "I reproach myself, dear madame, for not having called upon you before this."

How the young man's pen had hesitated over the form of asking such a simple thing — the permission to pay a visit! This hesitation was, in itself, the certain proof of a mystery, and one of the fragments thus put together again revealed its nature: "Some vengeances are infamous, my dear Ely, and the one you have conceived — "

Olivier had written this in the most cruel minute of his insomnia. His suffering found relief in the insolent use of the Christian name, in the insulting remembrance of an ineffaceable intimacy. Then he tore up the sheet of paper into minute fragments which betrayed the rage consuming him. After she had put together and deciphered this fatal phrase Berthe saw nothing else. All her presentiments were well founded: Baroness Ely de Carlsberg, of whom Corancez had spoken to Hautefeuille in the train, was her husband's former mistress! He had only wanted to come to Cannes because she was there, so as to see her again! The letter in his hand a few minutes before had been for her! He had gone with it to her villa!

Face to face with this indisputable and overwhelming certainty, the young woman was seized with a convulsive trembling that increased as the hour for luncheon drew near. — It burst all bounds when, toward noon, she received a card from Olivier upon which he had scribbled in pencil — always the same handwriting! — that a friend whom he had met had insisted upon keeping him for luncheon, and he begged her not to wait for him!

"She has won him back from me! He is with her!"

When she had realized this thought, weighted with all the horrible pain given by evidence that pierces to the heart, like some glittering, icy cold knife, she

felt that she could not support this physical suffering. With the automatic action that comes upon such occasions she put on her hat and veil and gloves. Then when she was dressed and ready for going out a final gleam of reason showed her the folly of the project she had conceived. She had thought of going to her rival's house, of surprising Olivier, and of finishing with it all forever!

To finish with it all! She looked at herself in the mirror, her teeth chattering, her face lividly pale, all her body convulsively trembling. She realized that such a step in her present state with such a woman would be absurd. But suppose some one else took this step? Suppose some one else went to Olivier and said, "Your wife knows all. She is dying. Come."

The idea of him whom she believed to be her husband's confidant had no sooner occurred to the mind of the unhappy woman when she rang for her chambermaid with the same automatic nervousness.

"Beg Monsieur Hautefeuille to come here, if he is in his room," she said, she who had never had a single conversation in her life *tête-à-tête* with the young man.

But she cared nothing for conventionality at the moment. Her nervousness was so great that she had to sit down when the chambermaid returned, and said that Monsieur Hautefeuille was coming. Her limbs would no longer support her. When he entered the room about five minutes later she did not give him

the time to greet her, to ask why she had sent for him. She sprang toward him like some wild creature seizing her prey, and, taking his arm in her trembling hand with the incoherence of a madwoman who only sees the idea possessing her and not the being to whom she speaks, she said: —

"Ah! you have come at last. — You must have felt that I suspected something. — You must go and tell him that I know all, you hear me, all, — and bring him here. Go! Go! If he does not come back I shall go mad. — You have an honorable heart, Monsieur Hautefeuille. You must think it wrong, very wrong, that he should return to that woman after only six months of married life. Go, and tell him that he must come back, that I forgive him, that I will never speak about it again. I cannot show him how I love him. — But I do love him, I swear that I love him. — Ah! my head is reeling."

"But, Madame du Prat," said Pierre, "what is the matter? What has gone wrong? Where must I go to find Olivier? What is it that you know? What is it that he has hidden from you? Where has he returned to? — I assure you I do not understand a single thing."

"Ah! you are lying to me again!" replied Berthe, more violent still. "You are trying to spare me! — But I tell you I know all. — Do you want proofs? Would you like me to tell you what you talked about

in your first conversation together the day we arrived, when you left me alone at the hotel? Would you like to know what you talk about every time that I am not present? — It is of the woman who was his mistress in Rome, of whom he has never ceased thinking. — He travelled with her portrait in his portfolio during our honeymoon! I saw that portrait — I tell you I saw it! That was how I learned her name. The portrait was signed at the bottom, signed 'Ely.' — You are satisfied now. — Do you think I did not notice your agitation, the uneasiness of both of you, when some one spoke of this woman before me the day we went to Monte Carlo? — You thought I did not see anything, that I suspected nothing. — I know, I tell you, that she is here. I will tell you the name of her villa if you like. It is the Villa Helmholtz. — I know that he only came to Cannes to see her again. He is with her now, I am certain. — He is with her now! Don't tell me I am wrong. I have here the pieces of letters that he wrote to her this past night asking for a meeting."

With her trembling hands, which had hardly strength enough to lift up the sheets of paper upon which she had arranged the damning fragments with such patience, she showed Pierre all the beginnings of a letter, among them the irrefutable sentence that had another significance for him. He was trembling so violently, his features expressed such anguish, that

Berthe was convinced of his complicity. This fresh proof, after so many, that her suspicions were well founded, was so painful to the poor woman that before Pierre's eyes she gave way to a fit of hysterics. She made a sign to show that her breath was failing her. Her heart beat so furiously that she felt she was suffocating. She pressed her hand upon her heart, sobbing, "Oh, God!"—Her voice died away in her throat, and she fell upon the floor, her head hanging loosely, her eyes gleaming whitely, and with a little foam at the corners of her mouth as though she were dying.

The young man recovered his senses before the necessity of helping the poor woman, whose anguish terrified him, of succoring her by the simplest means that could be imagined readily, of summoning the chambermaid, of sending for the doctor and of awaiting his diagnosis. These cares carried him through the frightful half hour that follows every such revelation, the half hour that is so terrible.

He only recovered consciousness of the reality of his own misfortune when the departure of the doctor had reassured him of the young woman's state. The physician recommended antispasmodics and promised to come again during the evening. Although he did not seem much alarmed, the young wife's illness was serious enough to demand the presence of the husband.

Hautefeuille said, "I am going for M. du Prat,"

and went off in the direction of the Villa Helmholtz. It was on the way, while his carriage was rolling along the road now so familiar to him, that he felt the first attack of real despair. The news he had just heard was so stunning, so unexpected, so disconcerting, and full of anguish for him that he felt as though in the grasp of some hideous nightmare. — He would awake presently and would find everything as it was only that morning. — But no. — Berthe's words suddenly recurred to him. He saw again in imagination the opening of the letter, written in the hand he had known for twenty years: "Some vengeances are infamous, my dear Ely, and the one you have conceived — "

In the light of the terrible sentence, Olivier's strange attitude since his arrival in Cannes became quite comprehensible with a frightful clearness. Indications to which Pierre had paid no attention crowded pell-mell into his memory. He recalled glances his friend had cast at him, his sudden silence, his half confidences, his allusions. All invaded his recollection like a flood of certainty. It mounted to his brain, which was stupefied by the fumes of a grief as strong and intense as though by the influence of some poisonous alcohol. As his horse was walking up the steep incline of Urie he met Yvonne de Chésy. He did not recognize her, and even when she called to him he did not hear her. She made a sign to the driver to stop, and

laughing, even in all her trouble, she said to the unhappy youth: —

"I wanted to know if you had met my husband, who was to have met me. But I see that a herd of elephants might have gone by without your seeing them! You are going to call upon Ely? You will find Du Prat there. He even deigned to recognize me."

Although Pierre had not the least doubt that Olivier was at Madame de Carlsberg's, this fresh evidence, gathered by pure chance, seemed to break his heart. A few minutes later he saw the roofs and the terraces of the villa. Then he came to the garden. The sight of the hedge he had passed through only the night before with so much loving confidence, so much longing desire, completed the destruction of all the reason that remained to him. He felt that in his present state of semi-madness it was impossible for him to see his friend and his mistress face to face with each other without dying with pain. This was why Olivier found him, awaiting his arrival, at a turn of the road, livid with a terrible pallor, his physiognomy changed, his eyes gleaming madly.

The situation of the two friends was so tragic, it presaged so painful an interview, that both felt they could not, that they must not, enter into an explanation there.

Olivier got into the carriage as though nothing were

amiss, and took the vacant place. As he felt the contact of his friend, Pierre shivered, but recovered himself immediately. He said to the coachman: —

"Drive to the hotel quickly."

Then, turning to Du Prat, he continued: —

"I came for you because your wife is very ill."

"Berthe?" cried Olivier. "Why, when I left her this morning she seemed so cheerful and well!"

"She told me where you were," went on Hautefeuille, avoiding a more direct reply. "By accident she has found among your papers a photograph taken in Rome and bearing a striking signature. She heard some one mention this name here. She at once came to the conclusion that the person bearing the name, and who lives at Cannes, was the original of the portrait from Rome. She discovered the torn fragments of some letters in which the same name occurred, and in which you asked for a rendezvous. In fact, she knows all."

"And you also?" asked Olivier, after a silence.

"And I also!" assented Pierre.

The two friends did not exchange another word during the quarter of an hour the carriage took to arrive at the Hôtel des Palmes. What could they have said in such a moment to increase or diminish the mortal agony that choked their utterance?

Olivier went straight to his wife's room the moment the carriage arrived, without asking Pierre when they would meet again and without Pierre asking him. It

was one of those silences that happen at a death-bed, when all seems paralyzed by the first icy impression of the unchangeable, when all is stifled in the grip of the "nevermore"!

The crisis of weakness, the necessity of expansion that follows such struggles, began for Du Prat on the threshold of Berthe's room. He was saluted by the sickly odor of ether upon his entrance. Outlined, pale and haggard, against the pillow, regarding him with eyes swimming in tears, he saw the wasted face of the girl who had trusted him, who had given him her life, the flower of her youth, all her hopes and aspirations. How unyielding he must have been toward the suffering, self-contained creature for her to have concealed all her feelings from him, loving him as she did!

He could not utter a word. He sat down near the bed and remained for a long time looking at the poor invalid. The sensation of the suffering that enveloped all four — Berthe, Pierre, Ely, and himself — pierced him to the heart. Berthe loved him and knew that her love was not returned. Pierre loved Ely, and was beloved by her, but his happiness had just been poisoned forever by the most horrible of revelations. As for himself, he was in the grasp of a passion for his former mistress, one whom he had suspected, insulted, deserted, and who had now given herself to his dearest friend.

Like a man who falls overboard in mid-ocean, who

is swimming desperately in the raging sea, and who sees the waves assembling that will swallow him up, Olivier felt the irresistible power of the love he had so yearned to know, rising all around, within him and on every haud. He was in the influence of the storm, and he felt it sweeping him away. He was afraid. While he sat near the bedside, listening to the irregular breathing of his young wife, he felt for an instant the intellectual and emotional vertigo that imparts to even the least philosophical natures at such moments the vision of the fatal forces of nature, the implacable workers-out of our destinies. And then, like a swimmer tossed about by the palpitating ocean, making a feeble effort to struggle against the formidable waves before they engulf him, he tried to recover himself — to act. He wanted to speak with Berthe, to soften all that it was possible to soften of her suffering.

"You are angry with me?" he said. — "And yet you see that I came the moment I knew you were ill. — When you are well again I will explain all that has taken place. You will see that things have not been what you believe. — Ah! what suffering you would have spared us both if you had only spoken during the past few days!"

"I do not condemn you," said the poor girl, "and I do not ask you to explain anything. — I love you and you do not love me; that is what I know. It

is not your fault, but nothing can change it.—You have just been very good to me," she added, "and I thank you for it. I am so worn out that I would like to rest."

"It is the beginning of the end," thought Olivier, as he passed into the salon in obedience to his wife's wish. "What will become of our household?—If I do not succeed in winning her back, in healing her wounded heart, it will mean a separation in a very short time, and for me it will mean the recommencement of an aimless life.—Heal her heart when my own is bleeding!—Poor child! How I have made her suffer!"

Through all the complications caused by his impressionability, he had retained the conscience of an honorable man. It was too sensitive not to shrink with remorse from the answer to this question. But—who does not know it by experience?—neither remorse nor pity, the two noblest virtues of the human soul, has ever prevailed against the dominating frenzy of passion in a being who loves. Olivier's thoughts quickly turned from the consideration of poor Berthe to the opposite side. The fever of the kisses he had pressed on Ely's pale, quivering face burned in his veins. The image of his friend, of the lover to whom the woman now belonged, recurred to him at the same time, and his two secret wounds began to bleed again so violently that he forgot

everything that did not concern Ely or Pierre, Pierre or Ely. And a keener suffering than any he had yet experienced attacked him. What was his friend, his brother, doing? What had become of the being to whom he had given so large a part of his very soul? What was still left of their friendship? What would there still be left to-morrow?

Face to face with a prospective rupture with Hautefeuille, Olivier felt that this was for him the uttermost limit of anguish, the supreme stroke that he could not support. The wreck of his married life was a blow for which he was prepared. His frightful and desperate reflux of passion for Ely de Carlsberg was a horrible trial, but he would submit to it. But to lose his consecrated friendship, to possess no longer this unique sentiment in which he had always found a refuge, a support, a consolation, a reason for self-esteem and for believing in good, was the final destruction of all. After this there was nothing in life to which he could turn, no one for whom and with whom to live. It was the entrance into the icy night, into total solitude.

All the future of their friendship was at stake in this moment, and yet he remained there motionless, letting time slip by that was priceless. A few minutes before, when they were in the carriage returning to the hotel, he could not say a single word to Pierre. Now he must at all costs defend this beloved, noble sentiment, take part in the struggle of which the heart of his friend, so

cruelly wounded, was the scene. How would he receive him? What could they say to each other? Olivier did not ask. The instinct that made him leave his room to go down to Hautefeuille's was as unconscious, as irreflective, as his wife's appeal to Hautefeuille had been, that appeal which had ruined all. Would Olivier's advances be followed with as fatal results?

When he had passed the threshold of the room, he saw Pierre sitting before a table, his head resting on his hands. A sheet of paper before him, still blank, showed that he had intended to write a letter, but had not been able. The pen had slipped from his fingers upon the paper and he had left it there. Through the window beyond this living statue of despair Olivier saw the wonderful afternoon sky, a soft pile of delicate hues in which the blue was deepened into mauve. Glorious masses of mimosa filled the vases and filled with their refreshing and yet heavy perfume the retreat in which the young lover had revelled during the winter in hours of romantic reverie, in which he was now draining the vast cup of bitterness that the eternal Delilah fills for her dearest victims!

Olivier had suffered many a poignant shock during this tragic afternoon, but none more agonizing than the silent spectacle of this deep, endless suffering. All the virility of his friendship awoke and his own grief melted in a fathomless tenderness for the companion of his childhood and youth, who was dying before his eyes.

He put his hand upon Pierre's shoulder, gently and lightly, as though he divined that at his contact the jealous body of the lover must rebel and shrink back in horror, in aversion.

"It is I," he said; "it is I, Olivier. — You must feel that we cannot remain with this weight upon our hearts. It is a load under which you are reeling and which is stifling me. You are suffering; I am also in torture. Our pain will be less if we bear it together, each supporting the other. — I owe you an explanation, and I have come to give it you. Between us there can be no secret now. Madame de Carlsberg has told me all."

Hautefeuille did not appear to have heard the first words his friend uttered. But at the sound of his mistress's name he raised his head. His features were horribly contracted, betraying the dreadful suffering of a grief that has not found relief in tears. He replied in a dry voice in which all his repulsion was manifest.

"An explanation between us? What explanation? To tell you what? To inform me of what? That you were that woman's lover last year, and that I am your successor?" Then, as though lashing himself to fury with his own words, he went on: —

"If it is to tell me again what you did before I knew whom you were talking about, you may spare yourself the pain. I have forgotten nothing. — Neither the story of the first lover, nor of the other, nor of the one who was the cause of your leaving her. — She

is a monster of falsehood and hypocrisy. I know it, and you have proved it. Don't let us begin again. It hurts me too much, and, besides, it is useless. She died for me to-day. I no longer know her."

"You are very hard upon her," replied Olivier, "and you have no right to be."

The cynicism of the insults Pierre was hurling at Ely was insupportable. It betrayed so much suffering in the lover who was thus outraging a mistress whom only the night before he had idolized! And then the passionate, true tone of the woman was still ringing in his ears as she spoke of her love. An irresistible magnanimity compelled him to witness for her, and he repeated:—

"No, you have no right to accuse her. With you she has neither been deceitful nor hypocritical! She loves you, loves you deeply and passionately.—Be just. Could she tell you what you now know? If she has lied to you, it was to keep you; it was because you are the first, the only love of her life."

"It is a lie!" cried Hautefeuille. "There is no love without complete sincerity.—But I would have forgiven her all, forgiven all the past, if she had told me.—Besides, there was a first day, a first hour.—I shall never forget that day and that hour.—We spoke of you that very day when I first met her. I can still hear her uttering your name. I did not hide from her how much I loved you. She knew through

you how dearly you loved me.—It was an easy matter to never see me again, to not attract me, to leave me free to go my way! There are so many other men in the world for whom the past would have been nothing more than the past.—But no; what she wanted was a vengeance, a base, ignoble vengeance! You had left her. You had married. She took me, as an assassin takes a knife, to strike you to the heart.—You dare not deny it.—Why, I have read it; I know you believe that, for I have read it in your handwriting! Tell me, yes or no, did you write those words?"

"Yes, but I was wrong," said Olivier. "I believed it then, but I was mistaken. Ah!" he continued with a tone of despair, "why must it be my lot to defend her to you?—But if I did not believe that she loves you do you not think that I should be the first to tell you, the first to say, 'She is a monster'?—Yes, I thought she had taken you in a spirit of revenge. I thought it from the day of my arrival, when we wandered in the pine forest and you spoke of her. I saw so clearly that you loved her, and oh! how I suffered!"

"Ah! You admit it!" cried Pierre.

He rose, and, grasping his friend by the shoulder, he began to shake him in a fury of rage, repeating:—

"You admit it! You admit it! You knew that I loved her, and yet you said nothing. For an entire

week you have been with me, been near me, you have seen me giving all my heart, all that is good in me, all that is tender and affectionate to your former mistress, and you said nothing! And if I had not learned from your wife you would have let me sink deeper and deeper in this passion every day, you would have left me in the toils of some one you despise! — It was at the beginning you ought to have said, 'She is a monster!' — not now."

"How could I?" said Olivier, interrupting. "Honor forbade it. You know that very well."

"But honor did not forbid you writing to her," replied Pierre, "when you knew that I loved her, to ask her for a meeting unknown to me; it did not prevent you going to her house, when you knew I was not there."

He looked at Olivier with an expression in which shone a veritable hatred.

"I see clearly now," he went on. "You have both been playing with me. — You wanted to use what you had discovered to enter into her life again. Judas! You have lied to me. — Traitor! Traitor! Traitor!"

With the cry of some stricken animal, he sank into a chair and began to weep passionately, uttering among his sobs: —

"Friendship, love; love, friendship, all is dead. I have lost all. Every one has lied to me, everything has betrayed me. — Ah! how miserable I am! — "

Du Prat recoiled, paling under the influence of this flood of invective. The pain caused by his friend's insult was deep enough. But there was no anger, no question of egoism in his feelings. The terrible injustice of a being naturally good, delicate, and tender only increased his pity. At the same time the sentiment of the irremediable rupture of their affections, if the interview finished like this, restored a little of the sangfroid that the other had quite lost. With a voice that was full of emotion in its gravity, he replied: —

"Yes, you must be suffering, Pierre, to speak to me in that way — me, your old companion, your friend! your brother — I a Judas? I a traitor? — Look me in the face. You have insulted me, threatened me — almost struck me — and you see I have no feeling in my heart for you except the friendship that is as tender, as sentient as it was yesterday, as it was a year, ten years, twenty years ago! I have played with you? — I have deceived you? — No, you cannot think that, you do not believe it! — You know well enough that our friendship is not dead, that it cannot die! — And all" — here his voice became agitated and bitter — "because of a woman! — A woman has come between us, and you have forgotten all, you have renounced all. — Ah! Pierre, arouse yourself, I implore you; tell me that you only spoke in your anger; tell me that you still care for me, that you still believe in our friendship. I ask it in the name

of our childhood, of those innocent moments when we met and mourned because we were not really brothers. Is there a single recollection of that time with which I am not connected? — To efface you from my life would be to destroy all my past, all that part of it that I turn to with pride, that I contemplate when I want to free myself from the vileness of the present! — For God's sake, remember our youth and all that it held of good and noble and pure affection. In 1870, the day after Sedan, when you wanted to enlist, you came to seek me, do you recollect? And you found me going off to your house. Do you remember the embrace that drew us heart to heart? Ah! if any one had told us that a day would arrive when you would call me traitor, that you would call me, by whose side you wanted to die, a Judas; with what confidence we should have replied, 'Impossible!' And do you remember the snowy night in the forest of Chagey, toward the end, when we learned that all was lost, that the army was entering Switzerland and that on the morrow we had to give up our arms? And have you forgotten our oath, that if ever we had to fight again, we would be together, shoulder to shoulder, heart to heart, in the same line? — Suppose the hour should come, what would you do without me? — Ah, you are looking at me again, you understand me, you feel with me. — Come to my arms, Pierre, as on that third of September, now more than ten years ago, and

yet it seems like yesterday. — Everything else in this life may fail us, but not our friendship. — Everything else is passion, sensual, delirium, but that feeling is our heart, that friendship is our very being!"

As Olivier spoke Pierre's attitude began to change. His sobs stopped and in his eyes, still wet with tears, a strange gleam appeared. His friend's voice betrayed such poignant emotion, the vision evoked by his brotherly love recalled such ideal thoughts to the unhappy man — visions of heroic deeds and courageous efforts — that, after the first shock of horrible pain, all his manly energy was called to life by the appeal of his old brother in arms. He rose, hesitated a second, and then seized Olivier in his arms. And they embraced with one of those noble sentiments that dry the tears in our eyes, that strengthen the wavering will and renew the strength of generosity in our hearts. Then briefly and simply Pierre replied:—

"I beg your pardon, Olivier; you are better than I am. But the blow was such a terrible one, and came so suddenly! — I had such entire, complete confidence in that woman. And I learned all in five minutes, and in that way! — I knew nothing, suspected nothing. — Then came the two lines in your handwriting after what your wife had told me, and on the top of your confidences! — It was like a ship upon the ocean at midnight cut in two by another vessel, and plunging beneath the waves forever. — A man could go mad in

such a moment. — But let us say nothing more about that. You are right. We must save our friendship from this shipwreck."

He put his hand before his eyes as though to shut out another vision that was paining him.

"Listen, Olivier," he said, "you may think me very weak, but you must tell me the truth. — Have you ever seen Madame de Carlsberg since you parted in Rome?"

"Never!" replied Olivier.

"You wrote a letter to her this morning. Not the one of which I read the beginning, but another. What did you write about?"

"To ask for an interview, nothing more."

"And she? Did she reply?"

"Not personally. She sent word that she was at home."

"Why did you ask for this meeting? What did you say to her?"

"I said what I then thought was the truth. I was overwhelmed by the idea that she was trying to revenge herself upon me through you, and I felt I must arouse a sense of shame in her. She replied to my reproaches and proved to me that she loved you."

And he added: —

"Do not ask me anything more."

Pierre looked at him. The fever of such an interrogation began to scorch him again. A question was

burning his lips. He longed to ask, "Did you speak of your past? Did you speak of your love?"

Then his native nobility recoiled before the baseness of such a degrading inquisition. He became silent and began to walk up and down the room, the living scene of a struggle which his friend watched in mortal anguish. The questions that he had just put brought Ely present before him with a too cruel vividness. They had reanimated the sentiments Olivier's manly and apologizing appeal had exorcised a few minutes before. Love, despising, disabused, vilified, and cruel, but still love, struggled with friendship in his aching heart. Suddenly the young man stopped. He stamped upon the floor, shaking his clinched fist at the same time. He uttered a single "Ah!" full of repulsion, of disgust, and of deliverance, and then, looking straight into his friend's eyes, he said: —

"Olivier, give me your word of honor that you will not see this woman again, that you will not receive her if she comes to see you, that you will not answer if she writes to you, that you will never ask after her no matter what may happen, never, never, never."

"I give you my word of honor," said Olivier.

"And I," said Hautefeuille, with a deep sigh that betrayed both despair and relief, "I give you my word of honor to do the same, that I will never see her again, that I will never write to her. — There is not

room for you and her in my heart. I feel it now, and I cannot lose you."

"Thank God!" said Olivier, taking his friend's hand. An inexpressible emotion overcame him, a mixed feeling of joy, of gratitude, and of terror — joy because of their beloved friendship, gratitude for the delicacy which had made Pierre save him the pangs of the most horrible jealousy, terror of the terrible agony imprinted upon his friend's face as he made his vow of self-sacrifice.

Hautefeuille seemed eager to escape from the room where such a terrible scene had taken place, and opened the door.

"You have a patient upstairs," he said. "You ought to be near her. She must get better quickly so that we can go away, to-morrow if possible, but the next day at the very latest. — I will come with you and will await you in the salon."

The two friends had hardly stepped into the corridor when they were met by a servant of the hotel. The man had a letter upon a tray, which he held out to Pierre, saying: —

"The bearer is waiting for a reply, Monsieur Hautefeuille."

Hautefeuille took the letter and looked at the superscription. Then, without opening it, he handed it to Olivier, who recognized Ely's bold handwriting. He returned the letter to Pierre and asked: —

"What are you going to do?"

"What I promised," replied Hautefeuille.

Re-entering his room, he put the unopened letter in another envelope. He then wrote on it Madame de Carlsberg's name and the address of her villa. Returning to the corridor he handed it to the servant, saying: —

"There is the reply."

And when he again took Olivier's arm he felt it trembled more than his own did.

CHAPTER XI

BETWEEN TWO TRAGEDIES

Ely awaited Pierre's reply to her letter without apprehension. Immediately Olivier had left she wrote, impelled by an instinctive, an irresistible desire to refresh and purify herself in Hautefeuille's loyal, devoted tenderness, after the cruel scene from which she issued broken, humiliated, and soiled. Not for a single minute did she do Olivier the injustice of suspecting that he would, even though possessed by the most hateful love, try to destroy the image that Pierre had of her — an image that bore no resemblance to her in the past, but now so true — so true to the inner nature of her present being.

She said nothing in this letter to her lover that she had not told him twenty times before — that she loved him, then again that she loved him, and, finally, that she loved him. She was sure that he would also reply with words of love, already read and re-read a score of times, but always new and welcome as an untasted happiness. When she received the envelope upon which Pierre had written her address, she weighed it in her hands, with the joy of a child. "How good

he is to send me such a long letter!" And she tore it open in an ecstasy of love that was at once changed to terror. She looked first at her own letter with the seal unbroken and then again at the envelope bearing her name. Was it possible that such an insult had really been paid her by "her sweet," as she called her lover, with the affectation common to all sentiments? Could such an insult really have come from Pierre, who that very night had clasped her to his bosom with so much respect, mingled with his idolatry, with piety almost in his passion?

Alas, doubt was not possible! The address was in the young man's handwriting. It was certainly he who returned the letter to his mistress without even opening it. Following the terrible scene of a short time before, this refusal to hear from her, *this* return of her letter, signified a rupture. The motive of it was indicated to Ely's terrified eyes with hideous plainness. It was impossible for her to guess the exact truth. She could not divine that it had been brought about by Berthe du Prat's jealousy, — a jealousy awakened by so many suspicions which started the long-continued inner tragedy and ended in the irresistible impulse which drove the young wife to make the most desperate appeal to the most intimate friend of her husband, to make an appeal that revealed all to him. It was a succession of chances that nothing could have foretold.

On the other hand, a voluntary indiscretion on the part of Olivier appeared so probable, so conformable to the habitual meanness of wounded masculine pride! Ely never thought of any other cause, never sought any other motive for the crushing revolution wrought in Pierre's soul, of which she had before her a mute proof, more indisputable, more convincing than any phrase. The details of the catastrophe appeared before her simply and logically. Olivier had left her frantic with anger and desire, with jealousy and humiliated pride. In an excess of semi-madness he had failed of his honor. He had spoken! What had he said? All? —

At the mere idea the blood froze in the poor woman's veins. From the minute when, upon the quay of the old port at Genoa, Hautefeuille had held out to her the despatch announcing Olivier's return, she had traversed so many horrible hours that it appeared as though in her thoughts she must have become accustomed to the danger, that she must have admitted the possibility of this event. But, when in love, the heart possesses such stores of confidence, united to a keen power of self-deception, that she came face to face with the actuality as unprepared, unresigned, as unwittingly as we all meet death. — Ah! if she could only see Pierre at once. If she could only be alone with him, could only talk to him, could only plead her cause, defend herself, explain to him all she once

had been and why, show him what she had now become and the reason, tell him of her struggles, of her longing to unbosom herself to him at the beginning, and that she had only kept silence through fear of losing him, through a trembling terror of wounding him in his tenderest feelings! If she could only see him to show him that love had caused it all, that it was love! —

Yes, see him! But where? When? How? At the hotel? He would not receive her. Olivier was there watching, guarding him. See him at her own villa? He would not come there again. Make a rendezvous with him? She could not. He would not even open her letter! She felt in the depths of her nature, which had remained so primitive and unrestrained, all the savage spirit of her Black Mountain ancestors rebelling against the bonds that tied her. With all her wretchedness she could not keep down a movement of reckless violence. Her powerless rage found vent — it was the only outlet possible — in a letter written to her cowardly denunciator, Olivier. She despised him at this moment for all the faith that she had felt in his loyalty. She loathed him with the same energy that she loved Pierre.

This second letter was useless and unworthy of herself. But to give free course to her rage against Olivier was to give relief to her passion for his friend. Besides — for in stirring up the depths of

our nature suffering arouses that vague foundation of hope that remains with us in spite of the deepest despair — was it not possible that Olivier, when he once saw how infamously he had acted, would go to his friend and say: "It was not true; I lied when I told you she had been my mistress"?

This whirlwind of mad ideas, vain rage, and senseless hypotheses was shattered and driven away by an event as brutal as the first. Ely sent the letter to Olivier by one of her footmen about seven o'clock. Half an hour later, when she was finishing her toilet in a fever of anxiety, the man brought back the reply. It was a large sealed envelope with her address written in Olivier's handwriting. Inside was her letter unopened.

The two friends had thus made a compact. They both insulted her in the same way! It was as plain to her as though she had seen them take each other's hand and swear a pact of alliance against her in the name of their friendship.

For the first time this woman, usually superior to all the pettiness of her sex, felt against their friendship all the unreasoning hate that the ordinary mistress has for even the simple companionships of her lover. She felt that instinctive impulse of feminine antipathy for sentiments purely masculine, and from which the woman feels excluded forever. During the hours following the double insult, Ely was not only a

woman in love repulsed and disdained, a woman who loses with him she loves all joy in life, a woman who will die of the effect of her loss. She was not only this, she also suffered all the pangs of a devouring jealousy. She was jealous of Olivier, jealous of the affection he inspired in Pierre and that Pierre returned. In the despair that the certainty of the cruel desertion caused her, she felt mingled an additional pang of suffering at the idea that these two men were happy in the triumph of their fraternal tenderness, that they dwelt under the same roof, that they could talk with each other, that they esteemed each other, loved each other.

True, such impressions were out of conformity with her innate magnanimity. But extreme sufferings have one trait in common: they distort the natural feelings and sentiments. The most delicate nature becomes brutal, the most confiding loses the noble power of expansion, the most loving becomes misanthropic when in the grasp of a great grief. There is no more ill-founded prejudice than the one echoed in the famous line —

"Man is an apprentice; suffering, his master."

It may be a master, but it is a degrading, depraving master. Not to be corrupted by suffering one must accept the trial as a punishment and a redemption. And then it is not the suffering that ameliorates one, but faith!

Without doubt if poor Ely had not been the disabused nihilist who believed, as she once said energetically, that "there is only this world," all the obscure fatalities that were crushing her down would have been made clear with a blinding light. She would have recognized a mysterious justice, stronger than our intentions, more infallible than our calculations, in the encounter that made the punishment of her double adultery issue from the friendship of those who had been her guilty partners in her failings, and caused those same accomplices to be each a punishment to the other. But in the blow that overwhelmed her she saw only the base vengeance of a former lover. And such a form of suffering could only end in degrading her. All her virtues of generous indulgence, of tender goodness, of sentimental scrupulousness that her love, magnificent in its enthusiastic spontaneity, had awakened in her heart, had receded from her. And she felt that all the most hideous and all her worst instincts were taking their place at the idea that these two men, both of whom had possessed her, one of whom she loved to the verge of madness, despised her. And in imagination she again saw Pierre as he was there before her, only twenty-four hours before, so devoted, so noble, so happy! — Ah! Pierre! — All her bitterness melted into a flood of tears as she cried aloud the beloved name. Ah! to what good was it that she cried for him? The man

for whom such passionate sighs were breathed would not even listen to them!

What an evening, what a night the unfortunate woman passed, locked in her room! What courage it needed not to remain there all the following day, with windows closed, curtains down! How she longed to flee the daylight, life, to flee from herself, plunged and engulfed in a night and silence as of death! — But she was the daughter of an officer and the wife of a prince. She had thus twice over the trait of a military education, an absolute exactitude in carrying out her promises, a trait that causes the disciplined will to rise superior to all events and to execute at the appointed time the duties imposed. She had promised the night before to intercede with Dickie Marsh in Chésy's favor, and she was to give his reply in the afternoon. Her lassitude was so great in the morning that she nearly wrote to Madame Chésy to postpone her visit and that to the American's yacht. Then she said, "No, that would be cowardly." — And at eleven o'clock in the morning, her face hidden by a white veil that prevented her reddened eyes and agitated features from being seen, she stepped from her carriage on to the little quay to which the *Jenny* was moored. When she saw the rigging of the yacht and her white hull outlined against the sky, pale with the presage of heat, she remembered her arrival upon the same sun-scorched stones of the little quay, in the

same carriage, only a fortnight before, and the profound joy she felt when she saw Pierre's silhouette as he looked for her from the boat anxiously. Those two weeks had been long enough for her romantic and tender idyl to be transformed into a sinister tragedy. Where was the lover who was with her when they left for Genoa? Where was he trying to hide the awful pain caused by her and which she could not even console? Had he already left Cannes? Ever since the night before the idea that Pierre had left her forever had made her heart icy with cold terror. And yet she devoured with her eyes the yacht upon which she had been so happy.

She was now near enough to be able to count the portholes, of which the line appeared just above the rail of a cutter moored near the *Jenny*. The seventh was the one lighting her cabin, their cabin, the nuptial refuge where they had tasted the intoxicating joy of their first night of love. A sailor was seated upon a plank suspended from the rail washing the shell of the boat with a brush that he dipped from time to time in a big bucket. The triviality of the detail, of the work being done at that minute and at that place, completed the faintness of the young woman caused by the air of contrast. She was speechless with emotion when she stepped upon the gangway leading from the quay to the boat. Her agitation was so apparent that Dickie Marsh could not resist an

inclination to question her, thus failing for once to observe the great Anglo-Saxon principle of avoiding personal remarks.

"It is nothing," she replied; "or rather nothing that concerns me."

Then, making his question an excuse for introducing the subject of her visit, she said: —

"I am all upset by the news I have just learned from Yvonne."

"Shall we go into the smoking-room?" asked the American, who had trembled at the sound of Madame de Chésy's name. "We shall be able to talk better there."

They were in the office where Marsh was busy when Ely arrived. The dry clicking of the typewriter under the fingers of a secretary had not stopped or even slackened a moment upon the entrance of the young woman. Another secretary went on telephoning to the telegraph office, and a third continued arranging documents. The intensity of their industry proved the importance and the pressing nature of the work being done. But the business man left his dictations and his calculations with as little compunction as an infant displays when he casts aside his hoop or ball, to question Yvonne's messenger with a veritable fever of anxiety.

"So the bolt has fallen! Are they ruined?" he asked, when they were alone. Then, in reply to Ely's

affirmation, he went on: "Was I not right? I have not seen the Vicomtesse for some little time. I have not even tried to see her. I thought Brion was at the bottom of all. I was sure you would make me a sign at the right moment, unless — But no, there is no unless — I was sure the poor child would estimate that man for the abominable cad that he is, and that she would show him the door the first word he uttered."

"She came to see me," said Ely, "trembling, and revolted at the ignoble propositions the wretch made to her."

"Ah, what 'punishment' he merits!" said Marsh, with an expressive gesture that accentuated the energetic boxing term. "Did you tell her to apply to me? Is her husband willing to work?"

"She came to see me to ask for a place for Gontran as superintendent on the Archduke's estate," replied Ely.

"No, no!" interrupted Dickie Marsh. "I have the very thing for him. It is better for me even than for him, for I have a principle that all services ought to be of some use to him that renders them. In that way, if the man you oblige proves ungrateful, you are paid in advance. — This is the affair. Since we were in Genoa we have done a lot of work. We have founded in Marionville — by we I mean myself and three others, the 'big four,' as we are called — a

society for working a score of ruined ranches we have bought in North Dakota. We have thus miles and miles of prairies upon which we want to raise not cattle, but horses. — Why horses? For this reason: In the States a horse is worth nothing. My countrymen have done away with them, and with that useless thing, the carriage. Railways, electric tramways, and cable cars are quite sufficient for every need. In Europe, with your standing armies, things are different. In another five years you will not be able to find horses for your cavalry. Now follow me closely. We are going to buy in the horses in America by the thousand for a song. We shall restore them to the prairies. We shall cross them with Syrian stallions. I have just bought five hundred from the Sultan by telegraph."

Excited by the huge perspective of his enterprise, he left the "we" to use the more emphatic "I."

"I am going to create a new breed, one that will be superb for light cavalry. I will supply a mount for every hussar, uhlan, and chasseur in Europe. I have calculated that. I can deliver the animals in Paris, Berlin, Rome, Vienna at a fourth less than the State pays in France, Germany, Italy, and in your country. But I must have some competent and trustworthy man to look after my breeding stables. I want Chésy to take this place. I will give him $15,000 per year, all his travelling expenses paid, and a percentage upon the

profits. You will perhaps say that when you want to make wealth by the plough you must put your hand to it. — That is true. But with the cable I am at hand if only my man does not rob me. Now, Chésy is honest. He understands horses like any jockey. He will save for me what a rascally employee would steal and all that an incompetent one would waste. In ten years he can return to Europe richer than he would ever have been by following Brion's advice and without owing me anything. — But will he accept?"

"I can answer for that," replied Ely. "I have an appointment with Yvonne this afternoon. She will write to you."

"In that case," Marsh continued, "I will cable instructions for the furnishing of their residences in Marionville and Silver City to be hurried on. They will have two houses at the society's expense. I shall go to the States to start him upon his duties. They can be there for June. — And if they accept will you tell the Vicomtesse that we start for Beyrout the day after to-morrow on the *Jenny?* I want them to go along with me. Chésy could begin his work straight away. He will prevent the Bedouins selling me a lot of old nags in the batch. I will write to him, however, more at length upon the matter."

There was a short silence. Then he said: —

"There is some one I should like to take with them."

"Who is that?" asked Ely.

The contrast was a very striking one between the sentiment of silent misery, of despairing prostration, of the uselessness of everything that prostrated her, and the almost boundless energy of the Yankee business man. In addition to her sorrow she felt a sort of bewilderment, and she forgot all about Marsh's intention in regard to his niece's marriage.

"Who?" echoed the American, "why Verdier, naturally. I have also my secret service bureau," he went on. This time there was even more energy in his manner. Admiration and covetousness were visible in all his being as he sounded the praises of the Prince's assistant and of his inventions. "I know that he has solved his problem. Has he not spoken to you about it? Well, it is a marvel! You will realize that in a minute.—You know that aluminum is the lightest of metals. It has only one fault; it costs too much. Now, in the first place, Verdier has discovered a process of making it by electrolysis, without the need of any chemical transformations. He can thus get it very cheap. Then, with his aluminum, he has invented a new kind of electric accumulator. It is fifteen times more powerful according to its weight than the accumulators at present in use.—In other words, the electric railway is an assured fact. The secret is discovered!—I want to take Verdier with me to the States, and with the help of his invention we shall wreck the tramway companies in Marionville and

Cleveland and Buffalo. It means the death of Jim Davis; it means his end, his destruction, his complete ruin! — You don't know Davis. He is my enemy. You know what it is to have an enemy, to have some one in the world with whom you have been fighting for years; all your life, in fact? Well, in my case that some one is Jim Davis. His affairs are shaky just now. If I can get Verdier's invention, I can crush him into pieces and utterly smash up the Republican party in Ohio at the same time."

"Still," said Madame de Carlsberg, interrupting him, "I cannot go to the laboratory to ask him for his invention."

In spite of her trouble she could not help smiling at the flood of half-political, half-financial confidences that issued pell-mell from Marsh. With his strange mixture of self-possession and excitability, he did not lose sight of his objects for a single moment. He had just rendered a service to the Baroness Ely. His motto was, give and take. It was now her turn to serve him.

"No," he replied eagerly, "but you can find out what the young man has against Flossie. You know that I planned their marriage. Did she not tell you? It is a very good match for both — for all. To him it means a fortune, to her it means happiness, to me, a useful instrument. Ah! what a superb one this genius will be in my hands!" he cried, closing his hands

nervously like a workman seizing the levers of an engine that he is starting in motion. "Everything seemed to be going on all right when, suddenly — bang! All came to grief. About five or six days ago I noticed that the girl was very silent, almost sad. I asked her point-blank, 'Are you engaged, Flossie?' 'No, uncle,' she replied, 'and I never shall be.' I talked with her and drew her out — not too much, simply enough to know that some lovers' quarrel is at the bottom of it all. If you would talk to her, Baroness, she would tell you more than she will me, and you can also talk to Verdier. There is no sense in letting the affair drag on in this way when they love each other as they do. For I know that they are both in love. I met Mrs. Marsh — she was then Miss Potts — one Thursday at a bazaar. On the following Saturday we were engaged. There is no time to lose, not a day, not an hour or minute ought to be thrown away. We shall waste enough when we are dead!"

"So you would like me to learn from Florence why she is so sad and why the affair is broken off? I will find out. And I will rearrange the whole thing if you like."

"That's it, Baroness," said Marsh, adding simply, "Ah! if my niece were only like you! I would make you a partner in all my business affairs. You are so intelligent, so quick and matter of fact when it is necessary. You will find Flossie in her room. As to

Chésy, it is an understood thing. If you like, I will cable for them."

"Do so," said Ely, as she walked away toward Miss Marsh's cabin.

She had to pass the door of the one she had occupied on that never-to-be-forgotten night. She pushed open the door with a frightful feeling of melancholy. The little cabin, now unoccupied, was so blank, seemed so ready to welcome any passing guest, to afford a refuge for other happiness, other sorrows, other dreams, or other regrets! Was it possible that the joy felt in this place had disappeared forever? Whether it was Marsh's conversation which had communicated some of his energy and confidence to the young woman or that, like the instinct to struggle to the last that animates a drowning man, the soul is moved by a vital energy at a certain point of discouragement, whether it were one or the other motive it is hard to say, but Ely replied, No! to her own question. Standing upon the threshold of the narrow cell that had been for her an hour's paradise, she vowed that she would not surrender, that she would fight for her happiness, that she would again recover it. It was only a minute's respite, but it sufficed to give her courage to compose her features so that Miss Marsh, a keener observer than her uncle, did not notice the marks of a deep sadness imprinted too plainly upon her face. The young American girl was painting.

She was copying a magnificent bunch of pinks and roses, of yellow, almost golden pinks, and of blood-red, purple roses, whose deep tints seemed almost black. The harmonious combination of yellow and red had attracted her eye, always sensible to bright colors. Her unskilful brush laid coats of harsh color upon the canvas, but she stuck to her task with an obstinacy and energy and patience equal to that displayed by her uncle in his business. And yet she was a true woman, in spite of all her decision and firm manner. Her emotion upon Ely's entrance was only too visible. She divined that the Baroness, whose villa she had avoided for several days, was going to talk to her about Verdier. She did not employ any artifice with her friend. At her first allusion she replied:—

"I know it is my uncle who has sent you as intermediary. He was quite right. What I would not tell him, what, in fact, I could not tell him, I can tell you. It is quite true, I have quarrelled with Monsieur Verdier. He believed some wicked calumnies that he heard about me. That is all."

"In other words you mean that it is the Archduke who has slandered you, do you not?" asked Madame de Carlsberg, after a short silence.

"Everything appeared to condemn me," replied Florence, ignoring the Baroness's remark, "but when there is faith there can be no question of trusting to appearances. Do you not think so?"

"I think that Verdier loves you," said Ely, in reply, "and that in love there is jealousy. But what was the matter?"

"There can be no love where there is no esteem," said the young girl, angrily, "and you cannot esteem a woman whom you think capable of certain things. You know," she went on, her anger increasing in a way that proved how keenly she felt the outrage, "you know that Andryana and her husband hired a villa at Golfe Juan. I went there several times with Andryana, and Monsieur Verdier knew about it. How I do not know, and yet it does not astonish me, for once or twice as we went there about tea-time I thought I saw Monsieur von Laubach prowling about. And what do you think Monsieur Verdier dared to think of me, — of me, an American? What do you think he dared to reproach me with? That I was chaperoning an intrigue between Andryana and Corancez, that I was cognizant of one of those horrible things you call a *liaison*."

"But it was the simplest thing in the world to clear yourself," said Ely.

"I could not betray Andryana's secret," replied Florence. "I had promised to keep it sacred, and I would not ask her permission to speak; in the first place, because I had no right to do so, and in the second," and her physiognomy betrayed all her wounded pride and sensation of honor, "in the second because

I would not stoop to defend myself against suspicion. I told Monsieur Verdier that he was mistaken. He did not believe me, and all is over between us."

"So that you accept the idea of not marrying him," said Ely, "simply through pride or bitterness rather than make a very simple explanation! — But suppose he came here, here upon your uncle's boat, to beg you to forgive him for his unjust suspicions, or rather for what he believed himself justified in thinking? Suppose he did better still; suppose he asks for your hand, that he asks you to marry him, will you say him nay? Will all be over between you?"

"He will not come," said Florence. "He has not written or taken a step for the last week. Why do you speak to me in that way? You are taking away all my courage, and, believe me, I have need of it all."

"What a child you are, Flossie!" said Ely, kissing her. "You will realize some day that we women have no courage to withstand those we love and those that love us. Let me follow my idea. You will be engaged before this evening is over."

She spoke the last words of exhortation and hope with a bitter tone that Florence did not recognize. As she listened to the young girl telling of the little misunderstanding that separated her and Verdier, she had a keen sensation of her own misery. This lovers' quarrel was only a dispute between a child — as she had called Miss Marsh — and another child.

She thought of her rupture with Pierre. She thought of all the bitterness and vileness and inexpiable offence that there was between them. Face to face with the pretty American's pride before an unjust suspicion, she felt more vividly the horror of being justly accused and of being obliged either to lie or to own her shame while asking for pity. At the same time she was overwhelmed with a flood of indignation at the thought of the odious means employed by the Archduke to keep Verdier with him. She found in it the same sentiment that had aroused her hatred against Olivier the night before: the attachment of man for man, the friendship that is jealous of love, that is hostile to woman, that pursues and tracks her in order to preserve the friend. True, the sentiment of the Prince for his coadjutor was not precisely the same that Pierre felt for Olivier and that Olivier felt for Pierre. It was the affection of a scientist for his companion of the laboratory, of a master for his disciple, almost of a father for a son.

But this friendship, intellectual though it might be, was not the less intense after its kind. Madame de Carlsberg, therefore, felt a personal satisfaction as though she were avenging herself in taking steps to thwart the Prince's schemes as soon as she had left the *Jenny*. It was a poor revenge. It did not prevent her feeling that her heart was broken by the despair caused by her vanished love, even amid all

the intrigues necessary to protect another's happiness.

Her first step after her conversation with Florence was to go to the villa that Andryana occupied on the road to Fréjus, at the other end of Cannes. She had no need to ask anything of the generous Italian. No sooner had she heard of the misunderstanding that separated Verdier and Miss Marsh, than she cried:—

"But why did she not speak? Poor, dear girl! I felt sure something was the matter these last few days. And that was it? But I will go straight away and see Verdier, see the Prince and tell them all the truth. They must know that Florence would never countenance any evil. Besides, I have had enough of living in hiding. I have had enough of being obliged to lie. I mean to disclose the fact of my marriage to-day. I only awaited some reason for deciding Corancez, and here it is."

"How about your brother?" asked Ely.

"What? My brother? My brother?" repeated the Venetian.

The rich blood swept to her cheeks in a flood of warm color at this allusion and then fled, leaving her pale. It was plain that a last combat was taking place in the nature so long downtrodden. The remains of her terror fought with her moral courage and was finally conquered. She had two powerful motives for being brave,—her love, strengthened by her happiness

and rapture, and then a dawning hope of having a child to love. She told it to Ely with the magnificent daring that is almost pride of a loving wife.

"Besides," she added, "I shall not have any choice for very much longer. I think I am about to become a mother. But let us send for Corancez at once. Whatever you advise, he will do. I do not understand why he hesitates. If I had not perfect confidence in him, I should think he already regretted being bound to me."

Contrary to Andryana's sentimental fears, the Southerner did not raise any objection when Madame de Carlsberg asked him to reveal the mystery or comedy of the *matrimonio segreto* to the Archduke and his assistant. The occasion would have furnished his father with an opportunity of once more using his favorite dictum, "Marius is a cunning blade," if he had been able to see the condescending way with which he accorded the permission that brought to a culminating-point the desires of the cunning intriguer. There is both Greek and Tuscan in the Southerners from the neighborhood of Marseilles, and they appear to have written in their hearts the maxim which contains all Italian or Levantine philosophy: "Chi ha pazienza, ha gloria." He had expected to make his marriage public the instant there was a chance that he was to become a father. But he had never hoped for an opportunity of appearing both magnanimous and

practical, such as was afforded him by consenting to the announcement upon the request of the Baroness Ely, and that out of chivalrous pity for a girl who had been calumniated. All these complexities, natural to an imaginative and practical personage, were to be found in the discourse that he held with the two women, a discourse that was almost sincere.

"We have to yield to fate, Andryana," he said. "That is a maxim I revere, you know. The story of Miss Marsh and Verdier gives us an indication of what we have to do. We must announce our marriage, no matter what happens. I should have liked to keep the secret a little longer. Our romance is so delightful. You know that I am romantic before everything, that I am a man of the old school, a troubadour. To see her, to worship her," he indicated Andryana, who blushed with pleasure at his protestations, "and without any witnesses of our happiness other than such friends as you"—he turned toward Ely—"such as Pierre, as Miss Marsh, was to realize an ideal. But it will be another ideal to be able to say proudly to every one, 'She chose me for a husband.' But," and he waited a moment in order to accentuate the importance of his advice, "if Corancez is a troubadour, he is a troubadour who knows his business. Unless it's contrary to your idea, I do not think it would be very wise for Andryana and me to announce our marriage to the Prince in person. Let

me speak frankly, Baroness. Besides, I never was good at flattery. The Prince — I hardly know how to say it — the Prince attaches a great deal of importance to his own ideas. He does not care to be thwarted, and Verdier's feelings for Miss Marsh are not very much to his taste. He must know of their little quarrel. Indeed, he may have spoken very harshly of the young girl before his assistant. He wants to keep that youth in his laboratory, and it is only natural. Verdier has so much talent. In short, all that cannot make it very agreeable for two people to come and say to him, 'Miss Marsh has been slandered; she has been the friend of the most honorable and most loyal of women, who is honorably and legally married to Corancez.'

"And besides, to have to admit that you are in error in such a matter, and in public, is a very difficult position to be in. Frankly, it appears to me simpler and more practical, in order to bring about the final reconciliation, to let the Prince learn all about the matter from you, my dear Baroness, and from you alone. Andryana will write a letter to you this very moment. I will dictate it to her, asking you to be her intercessor with His Royal Highness, and announce our marriage. Everything else will work easily while we are arranging as well as we can with good old Alvise."

The most diverse influences, therefore, combined to bring Madame de Carlsberg again into conflict with

her husband at the moment she was passing through a crisis of such profound sorrow that she was incapable of forethought and of self-defence, or even of observation. She often thought about this morning later, and of the whirl of circumstances in which it seemed as though neither Pierre nor Olivier nor herself could be dragged, a rush of circumstances which had carried her away in the first place, and had then reached the two young men. That Chésy had stupidly ruined himself on the Bourse; that Brion was ready to profit by his ruin to seduce poor Yvonne; that this latter woman resembled feature by feature Marsh's dead daughter, and that this identity of physiognomy interested the Nabob of Marionville to such an extent that he was determined upon the most romantic and the most practical form of charity; that Verdier had made a discovery of an immense value to industry, and that Marsh was trying to gain the benefit of this invention by the surest means in giving his niece as a wife to the young scientist; that Andryana and Corancez were waiting for an opportunity to make their astounding secret marriage public, — were only so many facts differing with those concerning her own life, facts which appeared to have never touched her, save indirectly.

And yet each of these stories had some bearing, as though by prearrangement, upon the step that she was about to take, acting on the advice of Corancez. This

step itself was to prepare an unexpected dénouement, a terrible dénouement for the moral tragedy in which she had plunged without any hope of ever issning. This game of events, widely separate from each other, which gives to the believer the soothing certainty of a supreme justice, inflicts on us, on the contrary, an impression of vertigo when, without faith, we notice the astounding unexpectedness of certain encounters. How many times did Ely not ask herself what would have been the future of her passion after the interview of Olivier with Pierre, if she had not gone upon the *Jenny* that day to render a service to Yvonne, if Marsh had not asked her to bring about a reconciliation between Verdier and Florence, and, finally, if the marriage of Andryana and Corancez had not been announced to the Archduke under conditions that seemed like bravado, and which only increased his exasperation and bitterness.

These are vain hypotheses, but they are felt bitterly by those who give themselves up to the childish work of rebuilding their life in thought. It seems a manifestation of the irresistible nature of fate.

As she approached the Villa Helmholtz, with Andryana's letter in her hand, Ely had not the faintest suspicion of the terrible tragedy drawing near. She was not happy; in fact, joy did not exist for her now that she was separated so cruelly from Pierre. But she felt a bitter satisfaction in her vengeance, a feeling that she was to pay for very dearly.

Hardly had she entered the house when she sent a request to the Prince, who never lunched with her now, to be granted an audience, and she was ushered into the laboratory, which she had only visited about three times. The heir of the Hapsburgs, a big apron wrapped around him and a little cap upon his head, was standing in the scientific workshop before the furnace of a forge, in which he was heating a bar of iron which he held in his acid-eaten hands. A little further away Verdier was arranging some electric batteries. He was dressed like his employer. There was nothing in the entire room, which was lighted from the ceiling, except complicated machines, mysterious instruments and apparatus whose use was unknown to any but the scientists. The two men, thus surprised in the exercise of their profession, had that attentive and reflective physiognomy that experimental science always gives to its followers. It is easy to recognize in it a certain submission to the object, a patience imposed by the necessary duration of a phenomenon, the certainty of the result to be gained by waiting — noble, intellectual virtues created by constant attention to natural law. Nevertheless, in spite of the calmness he displayed in his work, it was plain that care hung over the assistant. The Prince appeared rejuvenated by his gayety, but it was an evil, wicked gayety, which the presence of his wife appeared to render even more cruel. He met her with this sentence, the words being full of hideous allusions: —

"What has given us the honor of your visit to our pandemonium? It is not very gay at the first glance, yet we are happier here than anywhere else. Natural science gives you a sensation that your life does not even know of — a sensation of truth. There cannot be either falsehood or deception in an experiment that has been carefully performed. Is that not so, Verdier?"

"I am happy to hear Your Highness speak in that way," replied the young woman, returning irony for irony. "Since you are so fond of the truth, you will help me, I hope, to secure justice for a person who has been cruelly slandered here, perhaps even to you, Your Highness, and certainly to Monsieur Verdier."

"I don't understand," said the Archduke, whose visage suddenly darkened. "We are not society people, and Monsieur Verdier and I do not permit any one to be calumniated before us. When we believe anything against any one, we have decided proof. Is not that so, Verdier?" and he turned toward his assistant, who did not reply.

The Baroness Ely's words had been as clear to the two men as though she had named Miss Marsh, and Verdier's look revealed how he loved the young American, and what suffering it had caused him to know that he could no longer esteem her. This additional avowal of a hated sentiment was distasteful to the Archduke, and his voice became authoritative, almost brutal, as he went on: —

"Besides, madame, we are very busy. An experiment cannot be kept waiting, and you will oblige me very much if you will speak plainly and not in enigmas."

"I will obey Your Highness," replied Madame de Carlsberg, "and I will be very plain. I learn from my friend, Miss Marsh —"

"The conversation is useless if you have come to speak of that intriguing woman," said the Prince, brusquely.

"Your Highness!"

It was Verdier who spoke as he took a step forward. The insult the Archduke had cast at Florence had made him tremble to his innermost being.

"Well," demanded his master, turning toward his assistant, "is it true that Madame Bonnacorsi arranges for meetings in a little house at Golfe Juan? Did we see them enter? Do we know by whom the house is engaged and the lover whom she goes there to meet? If you had a brother or a friend, would you let him marry a girl whom you knew to be in the secret of such an intrigue?"

"She is not in the secret of any intrigue," interrupted Ely, with an indignation that she did not seek to dissimulate. "Madame Bonnacorsi has not a lover." She repeated: "No, Madame Bonnacorsi has no lover. Since you have authorized me, let me speak frankly, Your Highness. The 14th of this month, you under-

stand me, at Genoa, I was present at her marriage with Monsieur de Corancez in the Chapel of the Fregoso Palace, and Miss Marsh was also there. Right or wrong, they did not wish the ceremony to be made public. I suppose they had their motives. They have not these motives any longer, and here is the letter in which Andryana begs me to officially announce to Your Highness the news of her marriage. You see," she went on, addressing Verdier, "that Florence was never anything but the most honest, the most upright, and the purest of young girls. Was I not right when I said that she has been cruelly, unworthily calumniated?"

The Archduke took Andryana's letter. He read it and then returned it to his wife without any comment. He looked her straight in the face with the keen, haughty regard that seems natural to princes, and whose imperious, inquisitorial scrutiny reads to the bottom of the soul. He saw she was telling the truth. He next looked at Verdier. And now the anger in his eyes changed into an expression of deep sadness. Without paying any more attention to Ely than if she were not there, he spoke to the young man with the familiarity that the difference in their ages and positions authorized, although it was a familiarity that the Prince did not usually take in speaking to his assistant before witnesses.

"My dear boy," he said—and his voice, usually so

metallic and harsh, became tender — "tell me the truth. Are you sorry for the resolution you took?"

"I am sorry that I have been unjust," replied Verdier, with a voice almost as broken as that of his master. "I regret to have been unjust, Your Highness, and I would like to ask the pardon of the woman whom I have misjudged."

"You will have all the time you want to ask pardon in," replied the Archduke. "Of that you may be assured. It is from her that this knowledge comes. Is it not so, madame?" he replied, looking at Ely.

"Yes," replied the young woman.

"You see I was right," replied the Prince. "Come," he said, with a peculiar mixture of pity and abruptness, "look into your heart. You have had eight days in which to make up your mind. Do you still love her?"

"I love her dearly," replied Verdier, after a short silence.

"Another good man ruined," said the Prince, shrugging his shoulders. He accompanied the brutal triviality of his remark with a deep sigh which took away its cynicism.

"So," he continued, "the life that we lead together, a life that is so full, so noble, so free, does not suffice now: our manly joy and the proud happiness in discovering that we have so often felt together, that has rewarded us largely, royally, and fully so often, is

no longer enough for you? You want to re-enter that hideous society that I have taught you to judge at its true value? You wish to marry, to leave this refuge, leave science, leave your master and your friend?"

"But, Your Highness," interrupted Verdier, "can I not be married and continue to work with you?"

"With that woman? Never!" replied the Archduke, in a tone of passionate energy. His anger increased; and he repeated: "Never — Let us separate, since it has come to that. But let us separate without hypocrisy, without falsehood, in a manner that is really worthy of what we have been for each other. You know well enough that the first condition of your marriage with that girl will be that you make known to her brigand of an uncle, this secret," and he touched with his hand one of the accumulators standing on the table. "Don't tell me that you would refuse to make it known, because the invention belongs to us both. I give you my part. Do you hear? I give it to you. You would certainly betray me sooner or later, either through weakness or through that cowardly love that I see in your heart. I want to spare you that remorse. Marry that woman. Sell our invention to that business man. Sell him the result of our research. I give you full authority, but I shall never see you again. For the secret that you are selling to him is, believe me, Science. Follow your own will, but it shall at any rate not be said

that you did not know what you were doing, or that in doing it you participated in all the ignominy of this age: that you lent aid to that vast collective crime which idiots call civilization. You will continue to work. You will still have genius, and from this discovery and others that you will make, your new master will secure millions and millions. Those millions will signify an abject luxury and viciousness on high, and a heap of misery and human slavery below. How well I judged that girl from the first day! Behold her work! She appeared and you have not been able to hold firm. And against what? Against smiles and looks which would have been directed at others if you had not been there, which would have been for the first imbecile who had turned up with a manly figure and a pair of mustaches!— Against toilet, against dresses, and against riches. Let me continue for a moment. In an hour you will be near her, and you can laugh with her at your old master, your old friend, as much as you like. You do not know what it is to have a friend like me, one who loves you as I do. You will understand it some day. You will realize it when you have measured the difference between this feeling that you are leaving one side, between our manly communion of ideas, our heroic intimacy of thought, and that which you now prefer, the life which you are about to commence — an idle, degraded, poisoned life!

"Good-by, Verdier," and this strange person, in saying the word *good-by*, spoke with a tone of infinite sadness and bitterness. "I read in your eyes that you will marry that girl, and since it is to be so, go. I prefer never to see you again. Make a fortune with the knowledge that you have secured here. You would certainly have learned it elsewhere, so we are quits. The happiest hours of my life for years have been due to you, and I forgive you on that account. But I tell you again, I see you for the last time. Everything is over between you and me.

"As for you, madame," he continued, casting a glance of bitter hatred at Ely, "I promise you I will discover some means of punishing you."

CHAPTER XII

THE DÉNOUEMENT

The Archduke's threat was uttered in a way that betrayed an inflexible resolution. It did not cause the young woman to flinch or to lower her gaze. She did not remember anything of this scene, one, nevertheless, that was momentous for her, since it called down upon her the hatred of the most vindictive and unjust of men. She did not remember anything that had passed when she regained her room save one thing, and that was quite foreign to herself. As she had listened to the Archduke's passionate cry, wrung from him by wounded friendship, she saw, as though in a flash of blinding revelation, what had been the strength of the bonds uniting Olivier and Pierre. She realized keenly the sentiment that linked them in their revolt against her — the revolt of suffering Man against Woman and against Love. She understood at last the impulse that had made them take refuge in a virile fraternal affection, the one fortress which the fatal passion cannot subdue. She had seen the passions of Love and Friendship in conflict.

In Verdier's heart love had conquered. He had for the Prince only the affection of a pupil for his master, of a debtor for his benefactor. It was a sentiment made up of deference and gratitude. Besides, Verdier esteemed the woman he loved. How different would have been his attitude had he returned his protector's friendship with a similar sentiment, had he felt for the Prince the affection that Olivier had for Pierre, that Pierre had for Olivier! And, above all, what a change there would have been in him had he had to condemn Miss Marsh as Pierre had been forced to condemn his mistress!

This analogy and its contrast forced themselves upon Ely's notice, when she left the laboratory, with an intensity that completely exhausted all the physical strength that was left in her. She was no longer supported by the necessity of working for the sake of others. She was now alone, face to face with her grief. And, as often happens after any violent emotion that has been followed by too energetic efforts, she succumbed under the shock. Hardly had she reached her room than she was overpowered by an agonizing nervous headache. Such a crisis is really the shattering of the nervous system, whose strength has been exhausted by the force of will, and which has finally to surrender.

Ely did not try to struggle any longer. She lay down on her bed like some one in death agony, at one

o'clock, after having sent off a despatch to the one woman whose presence she felt she could support, the one woman upon whom she could rely — to Louise Brion, whose devotion she had almost forgotten during the past weeks.

"She is my friend," she thought, "and our friendship is better than theirs, for the friendship of those men is made up of hate!"

In the extremity of her distress she, therefore, also had recourse to the sentiment of friendship. She was mistaken in thinking that Louise was more devoted to her than was Pierre to Olivier, or than was the Archduke to Verdier. But she was not mistaken in thinking the devotion of her friend was of a different character. In reality, feminine friendship and masculine friendship have a striking difference. The latter is almost always the mortal foe of love, while the former is most often ouly love's complacent ally. It is rare that a man can regard with any indulgence the mistress of his friend, while a woman, of even the most upright character, has almost always a natural sympathy for her friend's lover so long as he makes her friend happy; it is because the majority of women have a tender feeling for love, for all love, for that of others as well as for that which concerns them more closely. Men, on the coutrary, have an instinct which remains in them, a relic of the savage despotism of an earlier barbarism. They do not sympathize

with any love that they do not feel, that they do not inspire.

Louise Brion had felt a pity for Hautefeuille at the very moment when she had received Ely's confession in the garden of her villa, at the very moment she had implored her friend to give up the dangerous passion she had inspired in the young Frenchman. From that evening she had felt an interest in the young man, in his sentiments, in his movements, even though at the time she was using all the eloquence that her trembling affection could suggest to persuade Ely to see him no more. When Ely gave herself up entirely to her passion later, Louise had withdrawn, had effaced herself, on account of her scruples, and in order that she might not be a witness of an intrigue which her conscience considered a great crime. She had gone away through discretion, so as to not impose an inopportune friendship on the two lovers, and delicacy had also had its share in her retirement, for she had felt all the shrinking of the pure woman from forbidden ecstasy. But she had not felt the least hostility to Pierre in her retirement and self-effacement. Her tender woman's imagination had not ceased to link him, in spite of herself, with the romantic passion of her friend. The singular displacement of her personality, which had always made her lead, in imagination, the life Ely was living, rather than her own individual existence, had continued, had been even accentuated.

Since Olivier's return this identification of her feelings with those of her dear friend had been more and more complete. The dinner at Monte Carlo with the Du Prats in such close proximity had made her feverish with anxiety. She had expected an appeal from her friend from that moment. She had lived in expectancy of this summons to help Ely to bear her terrors, to fight with her friend, to share the sufferings of a love whose happiness she had vainly striven to ignore.

She was thus neither surprised nor deceived by Ely's despatch, which simply spoke of a little indisposition. She divined the catastrophe that had happened at once, and before the end of the afternoon she was sitting at the bedside of the poor woman, receiving, accepting, provoking all her confidences, without any further inclination to condemn her. She was ready to do anything to dry the tears that flowed down the beloved face, to calm the fever that burned in the little hand she held. She was ready for anything, weak enough for anything, with indulgence for all and in the secret of all!

For a day and a half Ely was helpless with a severe headache. Then she asked her friend to assist her in her plans. Like all people of vigorous frame, Ely was never either well or ill in extremes. When at last she was able to sleep the heavy slumber that follows such a shock, she felt as well, as energetic,

as strong-willed as upon the day her happiness had been so completely destroyed. But she did not know how to employ her recovered energy. Again and again she asked herself the question, upon whose answer her movements depended: "Is Pierre still in Cannes?"

She hoped to see some one in the afternoon who would inform her, but none of the visitors who came to see her even uttered Hautefeuille's name. Upon her part she had not the courage to speak of the young man. She felt that her voice could not utter the beloved syllables without her face suffusing with blood, without her emotion being apparent to every one.

And yet there were only very dear friends who called upon her that afternoon. Florence Marsh was one of the first. Her eyes were bright with a deep, contented happiness. Her pleasant smile wreathed her lips at every moment.

"I felt that I had to come to thank you, my dear Baroness. I am engaged to Monsieur Verdier. I shall never forget all that I owe you. My uncle asked me to excuse him to you. He has so many things to do, and we leave to-morrow upon the *Jenny*. My *fiancé* comes with us."

How could Ely mingle any of the pain which oppressed her heart with the joy whose innocence caused her deep suffering? How could she let Andry-

ana, who came in smiling at the footman's announcement, "Madame la Comtesse de Corancez"—how could she let Andryana suspect her pain?

"Well," said the Venetian, "Alvise took it very calmly. How childish it was to be afraid! We might have spared ourselves so much trouble if I had only spoken to him from the first. But," she added, "I do not regret our folly. It is such a pleasant memory. And I had told such tales about Alvise to Marius that he was afraid. What could he do to us now?"

Next the Chésys arrived, Madame Chésy quivering with her new-found gayety, while Gontran was simply astoundingly impertinent as he spoke with aristocratic nonchalance of his rôle of horse-breeder in the West.

"When horses are in question, poor Marsh is simply a child," he said. "But he is such a lucky fellow. At the very moment that he undertakes such an enterprise he finds me ready to hand!"

"I am glad I am going to see the Americans at home," said Yvonne. "I am not sorry to be able to give them a few lessons in real *chic*."

How was Ely to trouble this little household of childlike Parisians? How could she stop their amusing babble? She congratulated herself that they did not even speak of the subject that lay so close to her heart. She listened to them talking of their American expedition with a gayety that gave the impression that

they were once more playing at housekeeping, forgetful of the terrible trial they had just gone through.

Ely could not help envying them these faculties of forgetfulness, of freshness, of illusion. But were not the destinies of Marsh, of Verdier, and of Corancez all alike? Had they not all before them space, and the future? Did they not resemble ships sailing upon a vast flood carrying them toward the open ocean? Her destiny, on the contrary, was like that of a boat locked in the narrow turn of a river, arrested and imprisoned by some barrier beyond which lie the rapids, the cataract, the precipice! A word uttered by Yvonne, who was wild with joy at the idea of seeing Niagara, brought this simile up in Ely's mind. The idea pleased her. It was a true image of her sentimental isolation. And while her visitors stayed she looked incessantly at Louise as if she wished to convince herself that there was one witness to her emotions, that there was one heart capable of understanding her, of pitying her, of serving her. Above all, of serving her!

In spite of the conversation she listened to, notwithstanding the questions to which she replied, her thoughts followed one idea. She felt she must know if Pierre had left Cannes. And this was the question that came quite naturally to her lips the instant she was alone with Madame Brion.

"You heard all they said?" she said to her. "I

know no more than I did before. Is Pierre still here? And if he is, when is he going away? Ah! Louise!"

She did not finish. The service she wanted to ask of her friend was of too delicate a nature. She was ashamed of her own desire. But the tender creature to whom she spoke understood her and was grateful to her for her hesitation.

"Why do you not speak frankly?" she said. "Would you like me to find out for you?"

"But how can you?" replied Ely, without feeling any astonishment at the facility with which her weak-minded friend lent herself to a mission that was so opposed to her own character, to her principles, and to her reason.

What result could possibly come from this inquiry about Pierre's presence and about his approaching departure? Was not this the occasion for Louise to repeat, with still more energy, the counsels she had given to Ely after her first confidence? There could be nothing but silence and forgetfulness between Madame de Carlsberg and Hautefeuille in future. For them to see each other again would be simply to condemn them to the most useless and painful explanations. For them to recommence their relations would be purgatory. Louise Brion knew all this very well. But she also knew that if she obeyed Ely's wishes, those dear eyes, now so sad, would be brightened by a

gleam of joy. And the only reply she gave to the question was to rise and say: —

"How can I arrange it? That is the simplest thing in the world. In half an hour I shall know all you want to know. Have you the list of visitors here?"

"You'll find it on the fourth page of one of the papers," said Ely. "Why do you wish to see it?"

"In order to find the name of a person whom I know and who is staying at the Hôtel des Palmes. I have it. Here it is, Madame Nieul. Try and be patient until I get back."

"Well," she said, re-entering the salon about half an hour later, as she had said she would, "they are both here, and they do not leave for a few days. Madame du Prat is very ill. It cost me little to find that out," she added, with a little nervous smile. "I went to the Hôtel des Palmes and asked if Madame Nieul was there, and sent up my card. Then I looked through the list of visitors and questioned the secretary with an indifferent air. 'I thought Monsieur and Madame du Prat had already left,' I said to him. 'Do they stay much longer?' And his answer told me all I wanted to know."

"How good you were to take all that trouble for me!" replied Ely, taking her hand and stroking it lovingly. "How I love you! It seems to have given me a fresh lease of life. I feel that I shall see him again. And you will help me to meet him. Promise

me that. I must speak with him once more, only once. I feel that I must tell him the truth, so that he may know at least how well I have loved him, how sincere and passionate and deep is my love for him! It is so hard not to know what he thinks of me."

Yes! What did Pierre Hautefeuille think of the mistress whom he had idolized only a few days before, of the mistress who had stood so high in his esteem, and who was suddenly convicted in his eyes so shamefully?

Alas! The unhappy youth did not even know himself. He was not capable of finding his way among the maze of ideas and of contradictory impressions that crowded, jostled, and succeeded each other in his soul. If he had been able to leave Cannes at once, this interior tumult might have been less intense. It was the only plan to be followed after the vow that Olivier and he had exchanged. They ought to have gone away, to have put distance and time and events between them and the woman they both loved, and that they had sworn to give up to their friendship. But what can the will do, no matter what its strength, against imagination, sentiment, against the emotion in the troubled depths of the heart? We are only masters of our acts. We cannot govern our dreams, our regrets, and our desires. They awake, quiver, and increase by themselves. They bring back memories until recollection becomes an obsession. All the charm of looks, of smiles, of a face, all the

splendor of outline, the beauty of form of a beloved creature, is made a living reality, and the old fever once more burns in our veins. The mistress whom we have abandoned stands before us. She wishes for us, she calls for us, she recovers possession of us. And if we are in the same city with her, if it only requires a quarter of an hour's walk to see her again, what courage is needed in order not to yield!

Pierre and Olivier felt the necessity of this saving flight, and they had taken a resolution to go away. Then an unfortunate event kept them in the hotel. As the secretary had told Louise Brion, Madame du Prat was really ill. She had felt the influence of a shock too great for her strength, and she could not recover from it. A weakness of the heart remained, of such intensity that even when she could leave her bed and stand erect, the least movement brought on palpitations that seemed to suffocate her. The doctor studying her case forbade her to even attempt to travel for several days.

Under these circumstances, if Hautefeuille had been wise, he would have gone away alone. This he did not do. It was impossible for him to leave Du Prat alone in Cannes. He said to himself that it was because he could not leave his friend at such a moment. If he had gone down to the bottom of his heart, if he had probed the place where we dissemble thoughts of which we are ashamed, where lie

hidden plans and secret egoism, he would have discovered that there were other motives that kept him there, motives that were much more degrading. Although he had the most complete confidence in Olivier's word, he trembled at the idea of his remaining alone in the same town as Ely de Carlsberg. In spite of the heroic effort to preserve a friendship that was so dear to them both, notwithstanding the esteem, the tenderness and pity they felt for each other, in spite of so many sacred recollections, in spite of honor, a woman stood between them. And that woman had introduced with her all the fatal influence that so quickly creeps into friendly relations, all the instinctive jealousy, the quivering susceptibility and uneasy taciturnity that destroys all.

They were not long in feeling this. Each understood how deeply the fatal poison had eaten into their souls. And soon they understood a thing that is both strange and monstrous in appearance, and yet is really so natural — they realized that the love whose death they had vowed in the name of their friendship was now bound up in that friendship by the closest ties!

Neither one nor the other could think of his friend, could look at him, or hear him, without immediately seeing Ely's image, without immediately thinking of the mistress who had belonged to them both. They were in the grasp of an idea that turned the few following days of intimacy into a veritable crisis of madness,

a madness that was all the more torturing because they both avoided the name of the woman out of fidelity to their promise.

But was it necessary for them to speak of her, seeing that each knew the other was thinking of her? How painful these few days were! Although they were not many, they seemed interminable!

They met the morning following their conversation about ten o'clock in Olivier's salon. To hear them greet each other, to hear Pierre ask about Berthe, to listen to Olivier's replies, and then to hear the two speak of the paper they had been reading, of the weather, of what they were going to do, one would never have thought their first meeting so painful. Pierre felt that his friend was studying him. And he was studying his friend. Each hungered and thirsted to know at once if the other had had the same thoughts, or rather the same thought, during the hours they had been separated. Each read this thought in the eyes of the other, as distinctly as though it had been written upon paper like the horrible sentence that had enlightened Pierre. The invisible phantom stood between them, and they were silent. And yet they saw through the open window that the radiant Southern spring still filled the sky with blue, still beautified the roads with flowers and sweetened the air with perfume.

One of them proposed a walk, in the vain hope that

a little of the luminous serenity of nature might enter their souls. They used to like to walk together formerly, thinking aloud, keeping step in their minds as in their bodies. They went out, and after ten minutes conversation came to an end between them. Instinctively, and without prearrangement, they shunned the quarters in Cannes where they ran the risk of meeting either Ely or any one of her set. They kept away from the Rue d'Antibes, La Croisette, and the Quai des Yachts. They avoided even the pine forest near Vallauris, where they had spoken of her upon the day that Olivier arrived.

Behind one of the hills which served as outposts to California, they found a deserted valley, quite neglected on account of its northern situation. In this valley there was a kind of wild park, which had been for sale for years. There, in this ravine without horizon, they came almost like two wounded animals taking refuge in the same fold. The roads were so narrow that they could no longer walk abreast. This gave them a pretext for ceasing to talk. The branches stung their faces, their hands were torn with thorns before they arrived at the little rivulet running at the bottom of the gorge. They sat down upon a rock among the tall ferns, and the savageness of this corner of the world, so solitary, and yet so close to the charming city, soothed their suffering for a few moments. The fresh humidity of the vegetation growing in the shadow recalled to their minds similar

ravines in the woods of Chaméane. And then they could speak again together, could recall their childhood and their distant friendly souvenirs. It seemed as though they felt their friendship dying away, and that they sought desperately the place whence it had sprung in order to revive its force. From their childhood they passed to their youth, to the years spent together in college, to the impression the war had made upon them.

But there was something forced in these glances backward. There was something conventional, something prearranged, that arrested all freedom of intercourse between them. They felt too keenly in comparison with their former talks in the same way that the spontaneity, the plenitude that had been the charm of their most unimportant conversations formerly was now lacking.

Was their affection any less than at that distant period? Would their friendship never be happy again? Would it never be delivered from this horrible taint of bitterness?

In addition, during their morning and afternoon walks, they only were witnesses to their suffering. If they did not speak freely of their thoughts, at any rate there was no deception. There was no necessity to act before each other. This was all changed during the meal times. They lunched and dined in the salon so that Berthe could be present.

The immediate recommencement of a daily familiarity after such scenes as those which had taken place between the two friends and the young woman appeared at first impossible. In reality it is quite simple and easy. Family life is made up of that only. Olivier and Pierre forced themselves to talk gayly and incessantly out of delicacy toward their companion. The effort was a painful one. And then even the most guarded conversation may be full of danger. A phrase, a word even, was sufficient to send the minds of both back to their relations with Ely. If Olivier made any allusion to something in Italy, Pierre's imagination would turn to Rome. He could see Ely, his Ely of the terrace covered with white and red camellias, his Ely of the garden of Ellenrock, his Ely of the night he had spent at sea. But instead of coming to him she was going toward Olivier. Instead of pressing him to her heart, she flung her arms round Olivier and kissed him. And the vision, prompted by a retrospective jealousy, tortured him.

And if, on his part, he made the most innocent allusion to the beauty of the promenades around Cannes, he saw his friend's eyes dim with a pain which recalled his own sufferings. Olivier could see him in thought walking with Ely, taking her in his arms, kissing her lips. This communion of suffering in the same thought, while it wrung their souls, attracted them with a morbid fascination. How they

wished at such moments to question each other about the most secret details of their reciprocal romance! How they wished to know all, to understand all, to suffer at every episode!

When they were alone, a final remnant of dignity forbade them giving way to these hideous confidences, and, when Berthe was there at table, they turned the conversation at once so as not to cause any suffering to the young woman. They could hear her breathe with that uneven respiration, at times short and at others too deep, the breathing that reveals heart-disease. And this sensation of a physical suffering so close to them stirred up a remorse in Olivier and a pity in Pierre that took away all power to act.

Thus the mornings and afternoons and evenings passed away. And both awaited with fear and impatience the moment of retiring. With impatience, because solitude brought with it the liberty of giving themselves up completely to their sentiments; with fear, because they both felt that the vow they had exchanged had not settled the conflict between their love and their friendship.

It is written, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." And the Book adds, "He that hath looked upon the wife of another with desire in his heart hath already committed adultery." The phrase is admirable in its truth. It defines in a word the moral identity that exists between thought and act, concupiscence and pos-

session. The conscience of the two friends was too delicate not to feél with shame that their thoughts, when once alone, were but one long, passionate infidelity to their vow.

Olivier would begin to walk about from his room to that of his wife when Pierre had left him, talking to her, trying to utter affectionate words, fighting against the haunting idea which he knew would completely possess him shortly. Immediately he entered his room, what he called "his temptation" grasped him, bound him, and dominated him. All his Roman souvenirs recurred to his imagination. He saw Ely again. Not the proud, coquettish Ely of former times, not the woman he had brutalized while desiring her, hated while loving her, through despair of never possessing her completely, but the Ely of the present moment, the woman whom he had seen so tender, so passionate, so sincere, with a soul that resembled her beauty. And all his soul went out toward this woman in an impulse of love and longing. He spoke to her aloud, appealing to her like a madman. The tone of his own voice would awake him from his dream. He felt all the horror and madness of this childishness. He realized the crime of his cowardly yearning. He thought of his friend, saying to himself, "If he only knew!" He would like to have begged his pardon for the impossibility of ceasing to love Ely, and also pardon for having made the vow

he had not the power to keep. He knew that at the same moment Pierre was suffering as he was himself. The idea was dreadful. At these moments of his martyrdom one thought recurred again and again to Olivier's mind, one idea possessed his heart. He felt that he ought to go to Pierre and say: "You love her, and she loves you. Remain with her, and forget me."

Alas! when such a project, with all its supreme magnanimity, occurred to him, he felt strongly that Pierre would reply, No! and that he himself was not sincere. He understood it with a mingling of terror and shame. In spite of all it was a joy for him — a savage, hideous joy, but still a joy — to think that if Ely was no longer his mistress she would nevermore be the mistress of his friend.

They were cruel moments. The time was not less miserable for Pierre. He also, the moment he was alone, tried not to think of Ely. And in trying he felt that he was yielding. In order to drive her image away he would call up in his mind the image of his friend, and this formed the very nature of his suffering. He would tell himself that Olivier had been this woman's lover, and this fact, which he knew to be the truth, which he knew to be of the most complete, the most indisputable verity, took possession of his brain. He felt as though a hand had taken him by the head, a hand that would never let him go again.

While Olivier was thinking about his mistress in

Rome, a softened, ennobled mistress, transformed by the love that Pierre inspired in her, Pierre perceived, beyond the sweet and gentle Ely of the past winter, the woman whom Olivier had described to him without naming her. He saw her again, coquettish and perverse, with the same beautiful face in which he had believed so sincerely. He told himself that she had had two other lovers, one when she was Olivier's mistress and one before then. Olivier, Pierre, and those two men made four, and probably there were others of whom he did not know. The idea that this woman, whom he had believed he possessed in all the purity of her soul, had simply passed from one adultery to another, the idea that she had come to him sullied by so many intrigues, maddened him with pain. All the episodes of his delightful romance, of his fresh and lovely idyl, faded away and became vile in his eyes. He saw nothing in it now save the lustful desire of a woman, wounded in her pride, who had attracted him by one artful plan after another.

Then he would open the drawer in which he preserved the relics of what had been his happiness. He would take out the cigarette case he had bought at Monte Carlo with such happiness. The sight of this foreign trinket wounded his soul, for it brought back to him the words uttered by his friend in the woods of Vallauris, "She had lovers before me; at any rate she had one, a Russian, who was killed at Plevna."

It was probably this lover who had given Ely the object around which he, Pierre, had woven so many cherished ideas, which he had worshipped almost with a scrupulous piety. This ironical contrast was so humiliating that the young man quivered with indignation.

Then he would see in another corner of the drawer the packet of letters from his mistress. He had not had strength to destroy them. Other words spoken by Olivier recurred to his memory — words in which he had affirmed, had vowed that she had loved him, Pierre, truly and sincerely. Did not every detail of their romantic intimacy prove that Olivier was right? Was it possible that she had lied upon the yacht, at Genoa, and in so many other unforgetable hours? A passionate desire to see her again took possession of Pierre. It appeared to him that if he could only see her, question her, understand her, his sufferings would be soothed. He imagined the questions that he would ask and her replies. He could hear her voice. All his energy melted away before the fatal weakness of his desire, a degraded desire whose sensuality was sharpened by scorn. And at such moments the young man hated himself. He remembered his vow. He remembered all he owed to his self-respect, all he owed to his friend. What he had said at the moment of the sacrifice was true — he felt that it was true. If ever he again saw Ely,

nevermore could he meet Olivier. He had a confused impression already that he hated them both. He had suffered so much from him on her account; so much from her on his account. Honor finally always won the day, and he would hold himself erect, strengthen himself in the renunciation he had resolved upon. "It is only a trial," he said to himself, "and it will not last forever. Once I am far from here I shall forget it."

This singular existence had lasted five days, when two incidents happened, one after the other, one caused by the other — two incidents that were to have a decisive influence upon the tragic dénouement of the tragic situation.

The first was a visit from the jovial and artful Corancez. Pierre had, in fact, expected him before. In order to put a bar to any tentative at reconciliation, the young man had given strict orders that he was at home to no one. But Corancez was one of those people who have the gift of triumphing over the most difficult obstacles. And on the morning of the sixth day, a morning as bright and radiant as the one upon which they had visited the *Jenny* together, Hautefeuille saw him again enter his room, the everlasting bunch of pinks in his buttonhole, a smile on his lips, a healthy color in his face, and his eyes bright with happiness. A patch of dry collodion upon his temple bore witness to the fact that he had received a severe

blow either the night before or very recently. The purple swelling was still visible. But this sign of an accident did not diminish his good humor nor the gayety of his physiognomy.

"Oh, this little cut," he said to Hautefeuille, after having lightly excused himself for insisting upon seeing him, "you want to know what caused it? Well, it's another proof of my luck. And, in spite of the homily of Monseigneur Lagumina, the Frenchman has cheated the Italian. It was caused by a little attempt that my brother-in-law made to bring about my death. That is all," he added, with his usual jesting laugh.

"You are not speaking seriously," said Hautefeuille.

"I never was more serious in my life," replied Corancez. "But it is written that I shall meet with a cheerful end. I do not lend myself to tragedy, it appears. In the first place, you know that my marriage was made public about five days ago. That is why you have not seen me before. I had to pay my wedding visits to all the highnesses and lords in Cannes. I met with a great deal of sympathy and provoked a vast amount of astonishment. Everybody was asking, 'But why did you have a secret marriage?' Acting under my advice, Andryana invented an old vow as the reason. Everybody thought it was very original and very charming.

"I had even too much success, above all with Alvise. He only made one reproach — that we had

hidden it from him, that we had ever supposed for a moment he would have stood in the way of his sister's happiness. It was 'my brother' here, 'my brother' there. It was the only thing one heard in the entire house. But we Southerners understand revenge, particularly when Corsicans, Sardinians, or Italians are in question. I asked myself at every moment, 'When is the sword going to fall?'"

"It was very imprudent of him to get so quickly to work," interrupted Pierre.

"You don't know the ancedote," said Corancez, "of some one who saw a poor devil going past on his way to the gallows. 'There is a man who has miscalculated,' he said. Every murderer does that, and, after all, he hadn't calculated so badly as you think. Who would ever have suspected Count Alvise Navagero of having made away with his sister's husband, the man who was his intimate friend? I told you before that he was a man of the time of Machiavelli, very modernized.

"Just judge for yourself. I kept my eyes open, without appearing to notice anything. A couple of days ago, just about this hour, he proposed that we should go for a bicycle ride. It's funny, isn't it, the idea of Borgia bicycling along a public road with his future victim? I suppose I am the only one who ever enjoyed this spectacle. We were going along as quick as the wind, descending the winding road of

Villauris upon the edge of a species of cliff which cut sheer down at one side, when suddenly I felt my machine double up under me. I was thrown about twenty metres — on the opposite side to the abyss, luckily. That's the cause of this cut. I was not killed. In fact, I was so little hurt that I distinctly read on my companion's face something which made me think that my accident belonged to the sixteenth century, in spite of the prosaic means employed. Navagero went off to get a carriage to bring me back. When I was alone I dragged myself to the ruins of my bicycle, which still lay in the road, and I saw that a file had been cleverly used on two of the pieces in such a way that, after a half-hour of violent exercise, the whole thing would break up — and me with it."

"And didn't you have the wretch arrested?" asked Hautefeuille.

"Oh, I don't like a scandal in the family," replied Corancez, who was enjoying his effect. "Besides, my brother-in-law would have maintained that he had nothing to do with it. And how could I have proved that he had? No, I simply opened my other eye, the best one, knowing very well that he would not wait long before recommencing.

"Well, yesterday evening, before dinner, I entered the salon and there I found this rascal with his eyes shining so brightly and with such a contented air that

I said at once to myself, 'It is going to take place this evening.'

"I can't explain how it was that I began to think about Pope Alexander VI. and the poisoned wine which killed him. I suppose I have a good scent, like foxhounds. You know, or perhaps you don't know, that Andryana drinks nothing but water, and that Anglomaniac, my brother-in-law, only drinks whiskey and soda.

"'I think to-night,' I said, when we were at table, and wine was offered me, 'I think I will follow your example. Give me some whiskey.'

"'All right,' he replied.

"To be poisoned with an English drink by a Venetian struck me as rather novel. At the same time he was so calm when I refused to take any wine that I thought I must have been mistaken. But he praised a certain port that he has received from Lord Herbert so highly that I at once had the idea that this was the particular wine I must not touch. He pressed it upon me. I allowed the servant to pour me out a glass and smelled it.

"'What a singular odor,' I said to him, calmly. 'I am sure there must be something in this wine.'

"'It must be a bad bottle,' said Navagero; 'throw it away.'

"His voice, his look, his bearing, convinced me. I felt I was right. I said nothing. But at the moment

the *maître d'hôtel* was going to take away my glass I laid my hand upon it, and asked for a little bottle.

"'I am going to take this wine to an analyst,' I said, with the most natural air in the world. 'They say that port made for the English market never even sees a grape. I am curious to know if that is the truth.'

"They brought me a little bottle, and with the greatest calmness possible I filled it with the wine, corked it up and placed the bottle in my pocket. I wish you could have seen my brother-in-law's expression. We had a little explanation later on in the evening, at the end of which it was decided between us, in quite a friendly way, that I would not denounce him to the police, but that he would leave for Venice to-day. He will reside in the Palace, he will have a decent income, and I am certain he will not begin again. I warned him, in any case, I would have the wine analyzed, and that the result of this analysis would be placed somewhere safely. I may tell you that he had put a strong dose of strychnine in the bottle. I have two copies of the analyst's report. One of them I have given to Madame de Carlsberg and the other I would like you to keep. Will you?"

"Gladly," replied Pierre, taking the paper that the Southerner held out to him.

Such is the egoism of passion that, notwithstanding the astounding adventure of which he had just been

made the confidant, Ely's name, uttered by chance, had moved him more than all the rest. It appeared to him that, as he spoke of Madame de Carlsberg, Corancez looked at him inquisitively. He wondered whether he had brought a message for him. No! Ely was not a woman to choose such a man as Corancez as ambassador.

But Corancez was just the man to undertake such a conciliatory mission upon his own responsibility. He had gone to Ely's villa the night before to tell her the same story and to ask of her the same service. He had naturally spoken of Hautefeuille, and he had suspected a quarrel. This strange creature had a real affection, almost a religion, for Pierre. He felt a tender gratitude to Ely. Forgetting his own story, of which he was nevertheless very proud, he at once began to try to bring the two lovers together again. With all his intelligence he could not guess the truth of the tragedy being enacted in the souls of these two beings. He had seen them so loving and so happy together! He thought that to tell Pierre that Ely was suffering would be sufficient to bring him back to her.

"Is it long since you saw Madame de Carlsberg?" he asked, after having finished commenting upon his adventure, which he did very modestly, for he was amiable enough in his triumph.

"Not for several days," replied Hautefeuille. And the question made his heart beat.

In order to keep his word scrupulously, he ought not to have permitted his wily friend to go any further. On the contrary, he could not resist asking: —

"Why?"

"Oh, nothing," said Corancez. "I only wished to ask your opiniou about her. I am not satisfied that she is very well. She was very charming last night, as usual, but nervous and melancholy. I am afraid her household affairs are going from bad to worse, and that that brute of an Archduke is leading her a life of martyrdom — all the more because she has helped Verdier to marry Miss Marsh. Did you not know? Dickie, our friend of the *Jenny*, has left for the East with the Chésys, his niece, and Verdier on board. You can just imagine the Prince's fury."

"So you think he is cruel with her?" asked Pierre.

"I don't think it, I am sure. Go and see her, it will do her good. She feels a real affection for you. Of that I am convinced. And she was thinking about you, I feel certain, when she said that all her friends had abandoned her."

So she was unhappy! While Corancez was speaking, it seemed to Pierre that he heard the echo of the sigh that had issued from the heart of the woman he loved so much! He saw again the sad, longing look of the mistress he judged so harshly. This indirect contact with her, short as it was, moved him deeply — so

deeply, in fact, that Olivier noticed his agitation. He immediately suspected that something had happened.

"I met Corancez leaving the hotel," he said. "Did you see him?"

"He has just paid me a long visit," replied Pierre.

He told Olivier the story of the two attempts which had been made upon the life of Andryana's husband.

"He would only have had what he deserves," said Olivier. "You know what my opinion is about him and his marriage. Was that all he had to tell you?"

There was a short silence. Then he added: —

"He did not speak to you of — you know whom?"

"Yes," replied Pierre.

"And it has pained you?" asked Olivier.

"Very much."

The two friends looked at each other. For the first time in six days they had made a definite allusion to the being constantly in their thoughts. Olivier hesitated, as if the words he was going to say were beyond his strength. Then he went on in a dull tone of voice: —

"Listen, Pierre," he began; "you are too miserable. This state of things cannot last. I am going away the day after to-morrow. Berthe is almost well again. The doctor authorizes her to return to Paris; he even advises it. Let things stay as they are for another forty-eight hours; then, when I am no longer here,

return to her. I release you from your vow. I shall not see her, and I shall not know that you have seen her. Let what is past remain dead between us. You love her more than you love me. Let that love triumph."

"You are mistaken, Olivier," replied Pierre. "Of course it pains me; I do not deny it. But the suffering does not come from my resolution — that I have never regretted for a moment. No, the suffering is caused by the past. But it is past, and forever. It would be intolerable for us both were I to return to her under these conditions. No, I have given you my word and I repeat it. As to what you say, that I love her more than I love you, you have only to look at me."

Big, heavy tears were in his eyes and rolling down his cheeks as he spoke. Tears also sprang from Olivier's heart to his eyes at the sight. For a few moments they remained without speaking. This common suffering, after their long silence, brought their souls closer together again. The same impulse of pity had made Olivier release Pierre from his vow and had made Pierre refuse to be released. It was the same impulse of pity that brought tears to their eyes. Each pitied the other and each felt he was pitied. Their affection returned in all its strength, and their friendship moved them so deeply that once again love was conquered.

Pierre was the first to dry his eyes. With the same resolute tone as when he made his vow, he said: "I shall leave when you do, in two days, and it will not cause me a single pang. To remain here would be impossible. I will not do you that injustice. I will not be a traitor to our friendship."

"Ah, my dear boy," replied Olivier, "you give me a fresh lease of life. I would have left you without a single reproach, without a complaint. I was very sincere in my proposition, but it was too hard. I believe it would have killed me."

After this conversation they passed an afternoon and evening that were strangely quiet, almost happy. When the soul is ill, there are such moments of respite, just as when the body is diseased — moments of languid calm, when it appears as though one were brought to life again, still feeble and bruised, it is true.

This sensation of recovery, fragile and feeble though it might be, was increased in the two friends by the convalescence of Berthe. Olivier had contented her and brought about her recovery, by what charitable deceptions no one but he knew. But the young wife was much better and could walk about, devoting her attention to the many details of their approaching departure. She was so visibly happy to go away that a tiny trace of reserve seemed to melt away before her pleasure. She had suffered so much in these last

few days, and the suffering had been sufficient to awake her feminine tact from its long sleep. She had made a resolution. It was to win her husband's love, and to merit it. Such efforts are touching to a man who can understand them, for they indicate such humility and so much devotion. It is so hard for a young wife, it is so opposed to her instincts of sentimental pride, to beg for a sentiment, to provoke it, to conquer. It is so hard to be loved because she loves, and not because she is loved.

Olivier had too much delicacy not to feel this shade of sentiment. He gave himself up to the peculiar impression which a man feels who suffers through a woman, when he receives from another the caresses of which his unhappy love has taught him the value. He smiled at Berthe as he had never previously smiled, and Pierre was even deceived by this semi-cheerfulness of his friend. Was it not in a certain sense his own work? Was it not the price of the sacrifice he had made when he had renewed his vow? It was one of those moments which often appear just before the event of some great crisis of which the deceitful calmness impresses our mind later, which astonishes us and makes us tremble when we look back. Nothing bears a more eloquent witness that life is but a dream, that we are simply the playthings of a superior power which urges us along the road we

have to take, in which we can never see to-day what to-morrow will bring forth. Danger approaches and stands face to face with us. The masters of our destiny are by our side. They live and breathe without seeming to realize the work which is reserved for them. Is it hazard, fatality, providence? What lot does Fate reserve for us?

Corancez called on Friday. The friends were to leave Cannes on Sunday. On Saturday morning, about eleven o'clock, Hautefeuille was in his room packing some of his clothes, when a knock at the door startled him. Although he was firmly resolved to keep his word, he could not help hoping. Hoping for what? He could not have told himself. But an unconscious, irresistible intuition warned him that Ely would not let him go without trying to see him again. And yet she had not given any sign of life since he had returned her letter. She had not sent any one to see him, for Corancez had come without her knowledge. But the young man was in the state of nervous anxiety which presages and precedes any great event close at hand. And his voice trembled as he called out "Come in" to the unknown visitor who knocked at his door. He knew that this visitor, no matter who it was, came from Ely.

It was simply one of the hotel servants. He brought a letter. It had been delivered by a messenger who had gone away without waiting for a reply. Haute-

feuille looked at the envelope without opening it. Was he going to read this letter? He knew it had been sent him by Madame de Carlsberg. The address was not written in her handwriting. Pierre cast about in his memory to find out where he had seen this nervous, uneven, almost timid-looking writing. All at once he remembered the anonymous note he had received after the evening spent at Monte Carlo. He had shown it to Ely, who had said, "It is from Louise." The letter he held in his hand also came from Madame Brion.

There was no longer any possible doubt. To open the envelope was to communicate with Ely, to seek to hear from her, to break his word, to betray his friend. Pierre felt all this, and, throwing the tempting letter from him, he remained for a long while his face buried in his hands. To do him justice, he did not try to excuse himself by any sophistry. "I ought not to read this letter," he thought. "I ought not to read it!" And then, after a few moments, after having locked the door like a robber preparing for his work, his face purple with shame, he suddenly tore the envelope open with trembling hand. A letter fell out, followed by a second envelope, sealed and unaddressed. If there had remained the least doubt in Pierre's mind as to the contents of this second envelope, Madame Brion's note would have dissipated it. It read as follows:—

"Dear Sir — A few weeks ago you received a letter which begged you to leave Cannes, and not to bring a certain misfortune upon some one who was severely tried and who merited your regard. You did not listen to the advice contained in this letter from an unknown friend. The dreaded misfortune has now arrived, and the same friend begs you not to repulse the second appeal as you did the first. The person into whose life you have entered and taken up so large a place never hopes to recover the happiness of which she has been robbed. All that she asks is that you will not condemn her unheard. If you will search in your conscience, you will admit that she has the right to ask it. She has written you a letter which you will find enclosed in this one. Do not send it back, as you did her first, with a harshness that is not natural to you. If you ought not to read it, destroy it at once. But if you do, you will be very cruel to a being who has given you all that has remained in her that is sincere, noble, delicate, and true."

Pierre read again and again the simple, awkward sentences that were yet so eloquent to him. He felt in them all the passionate fondness Louise Brion had for Ely. He was touched by them as all unhappy lovers are touched by proofs of devotion shown to their mistress. He felt such a longing to know that she was loved, protected, and cared for, although at the same moment he hated her with the most implacable hatred, although he was ready to condemn her with all the madness of rage. And what devotion could be greater than this shown by the pure-minded Louise in going from weakness to weakness so far as to charge herself with a letter from Ely to Hautefeuille. She had longed to go in person to the Hôtel

des Palmes to ask for Pierre, to speak with him, to give him the envelope herself, but she had not dared. Perhaps she would have failed had she done so, whereas this indirect expedient conquered the young man's scruples. The emotions that the simple note had aroused left him powerless to contend with the flood of loving souvenirs that swept over him. He opened the second envelope and read: —

"PIERRE — I do not know whether you will even read these few words, whether I am not writing them in vain, just as the tears that I have shed in thinking of you ever since that frightful day have been shed vainly. I do not know whether you will let me tell you once more how I love you, whether you will let me tell you that I never loved any one in the world except you, that I feel I shall never love any one else. But I *must* tell it to you with the hope that my plea may reach you, the humble plea of a heart that suffers less from its own pain than from the knowledge that it has caused you to suffer. When I received back the other letter I wrote, — the one that you would not open, — my heart bled at the thought that you must have been mad with pain, or you would not have been so harsh with me. And I felt nothing except that you were suffering.

"No, my beloved, I cannot speak to you in any other way than I have done since the hour when I called you to me to ask you to go away, the hour when I took you in my arms. I have tried to conquer my feelings. It caused me too much pain not to disclose all that I felt. If you do not read these lines, you will not hate me for the loving words I have said to you, for you will not know of them. But if you read them — ah! if you read them you will remember the hours which passed so quickly on the seashore in the shade of the calm pines at the Cap d'Antibes, the hours spent upon the deck of the yacht, hours spent at Genoa before you were struck

down by the terrible blow, hours when I could still see you happy, when I could still make you happy! You do not know, sweetheart, you cannot know, what it is for a woman to make the man she loves happy! If I did not tell you at once what you know to-day, it was because of the certainty that never again should I see in your eyes the clear light of complete happiness which shone from your enraptured soul—a light that I have seen so much and loved so much.

"Understand me, beloved, I do not wish to excuse my crime. I was never worthy of you. You were beauty, youth, and purity—all that is best, tenderest, and most loving in this world. I had lost the right to be loved by such a man as you. I ought to have told you the first day I met you. Then, if you had wished for me, you could have taken me and left me like a poor being that only lived for you, that was only made to please you a moment, to distract you and then say good-by. I thought of it, believe me, and I have paid very dearly for the movement not of pride, but of love. I had a horror of being despised by you. And then the woman that you had called into being in me was so different from what I had been before I knew you. I said to myself, 'I am not deceiving him.' And, believe me, I did not lie when I told you that I loved you. My heart was so completely changed. Ah! how I loved you! How I loved you! You will never know how much nor even I myself. It was something so deeply implanted in my heart, it was so sad when I thought of what might have been if I had only waited for you.

"You see, Pierre, that I speak of myself in the past as one speaks of the dead. Do not be afraid. I have not any idea of ending my life. I have caused you too much sorrow to increase your suffering by remorse. I live, and I shall live, if that can be called living in a being who has known you, who has loved and been beloved by you, and who has lost you. I know that you are leaving Cannes, that you are going away to-morrow. I cannot think that you will leave me forever without speaking to me. My hand trembles even in writing. I cannot find the words with which to explain my

thoughts. Yet it will be too cruel if you leave me without giving me the opportunity of making what excuse I have for the life I once led. If you were near me for only one hour, you could go away and then you would think differently of me. What once was can never be again. But I wish to carry with me into the solitude which will surround my life in future the consolation of thinking that you see me as I am, and that you do not believe me capable of something I have never committed. My beloved, the time is so short. You leave to-morrow. When you read this letter, if you do read it, we shall not even have an entire day to be in the same city. If you do read my poor letter, if it touches you, if you find that my request is not too great, come to me at the hour you used to come. At eleven o'clock I will wait for you in the hothouse. If you condemn me without any appeal, if you refuse to grant me this last interview, good-by again, and again good-by. Not a reproach will ever find place in my heart, and I shall always say forever and ever, 'Thanks, my beloved, for having loved me.'"

"I will not go," said the young man to himself, when he had finished reading the pages, eloquent with a passionate emanation of love. He repeated: "I will not go." But he felt that he was not frank with himself. He knew that he could not resist. He knew that he would yield to her imploring appeal, that he would obey the voice of the woman, a voice whose music rang in every word of her letter, a voice that implored him, that told of her adoration, that soothed his wounded heart like a sad caress sweet as death.

But the nearer Pierre drew to the meeting-place the more he felt an unspeakable sadness. His action appeared to him so culpable when he realized all its infamy that he was overwhelmed. And yet he would

not draw back. On and on he went. The love potion the words of the letter had poured into his veins continued to dominate his failing will. He went on, but the contrast between this despicable, clandestine walk to a woman that he despised, to a woman who made him despise himself for longing for her, was very different from the pilgrimages he used to make toward the same villa, along the same road, filled with a happy fervor.

And Olivier? Heaven! if Olivier could see him at present! If Olivier, whom he was betraying so cruelly, could only see him!

The tension of his nerves was so great, he was so shaken by the double emotions of love and remorse, that the tiniest noise startled him. The surrounding objects took on an aspect that was both menacing and fantastic. His heart beat and his nerves quivered. He was afraid. He seemed to hear footsteps following him in the night, and he stopped to listen. At the moment that he was going to ascend the slope by which he had been accustomed to enter Ely's garden, the idea that he was being followed became so strong that he retraced his steps, peering about along the road, among the bushes and heaps of stones. He avoided the strong rays of light of an electric lamp standing on one of the pillars of the fence as though he had been a robber.

His examination, however, was fruitless. But the

idea was so strong that he was afraid to enter by the same path. It appeared too open, too easy of access. He began to run, as though he had really been followed, around the little park which ended the garden of the villa at its upper end. A wall enclosed a part of it. With the help of the branches of an oak growing at its foot, he climbed over. While still on the coping he listened again. He heard but the sound of the dying breeze, the quivering of the foliage, the vast silence of night, and far, far away, the barking of a dog in some isolated house. He thought he must have been dreaming, and slipped down on the other side of the wall. It was about three metres in height, and he was lucky enough to fall upon a spot of soft earth. Then he made his way toward the house.

A few minutes later he was at the door of the greenhouse. He pushed it open gently and Ely's hand took his own.

But what would have been his thoughts if he had known that his fears were well founded, if he had known that he had been followed since he left the hotel, that the witness whose presence he had felt so near him in the dark, until the moment he began to run, was none other than Olivier?

The house stood closed and silent in all the mystery of its shadows, with isolated spots of light where the lamp shone full upon it. The same vast silence of night that had oppressed Pierre while upon the wall,

the silence broken by the distant baying of a dog, still enveloped the country. The trees still quivered, and the flowers poured forth their perfume. The stars still shone, and Olivier remained motionless at the edge of the garden, in the place where he had thrown himself down so that his friend might not see him.

His suffering at this moment was not the suffering of some one who struggles and fights. When he saw Pierre at luncheon, his contracted features, his shining eyes, his trembling lips, had revealed to him that something had happened. He was so weary of fighting, so tired of always struggling with his own heart, of seeing so much suffering in his friend's heart! Besides, what more could he ask him after the conversation of the night before? So he kept silent. What was the good of continually torturing each other?

Then, as Hautefeuille's agitation increased, his suspicions were aroused. He thought, "She has written to him asking for a meeting!" But no, it was not possible! To receive a letter from Ely, read it, and not speak about it was a crime against their friendship under their present relations that Pierre would never be guilty of. Olivier struggled to convince himself of the madness of his suspicion. The emotion of his friend communicated itself to him. He felt, when he took his hand upon separating for the night, that his betrayal was near, was certain, was even then an accomplished fact!

Why did he not speak to him at that moment? A heart that has been deceived often yields to such an impulse of renunciation. It is impossible to struggle against certain unexpected events, it is impossible to complain of them. What reproach could he make to Pierre? What was the good of reproaching him if he had really conceived the idea of breaking the compact he had entered into with him? Yes, what was the good? And Olivier remained leaning upon the window-sill, summoning up all his dignity to keep from going to his friend's room while repeating that it was impossible.

And then, at a certain moment, he thought he saw Pierre's profile as some one crossed the garden of the hotel. This time he could resist no longer. He felt compelled to go down and question the *concierge*. He learned that Pierre had just gone out. A few minutes later he himself took the direction of the Villa Helmholtz. He recognized his friend and followed him. He saw him turn, listen, and go on again. Just as Pierre was entering the garden, Olivier could not help making a step forward. It was at this moment that Pierre heard him. Olivier drew back into the darkness. His friend passed quite close to him. Indeed, he almost touched him, and then began to run, most probably toward another entrance with which he was familiar, and Olivier ceased to follow him.

He sank down on the slope and gave way to unutter-

able despair, in which were reunited and collected all the sorrow and suffering he had gone through during the last two weeks. He knew that at that very minute, in the silent house so near him, Ely and Pierre were together. He knew that they had forgiven each other, that they loved each other. And the thought caused him a pang of agony so keen that he could not move. He almost fainted under the emotions caused by his passionate love for this woman and the sentiment that his friend, a friend so dear to him, had trampled him under foot on his way to her, mingled with the tortures of jealousy and the bitterness of betrayal. He ended by flinging himself, face downward, upon the cold earth, the gentle earth that takes us all into her embrace one day, whose weight, while crushing us down, also crushes out the intolerable sufferings of our heart. There he lay, his arms extended, his face buried in the grass, like a corpse, longing for death, longing to be free, longing to love this woman no more, to never again see his friend, to have finished with existence, to sleep the sleep that is without dreams, without memory, a sleep in which Ely and Pierre and himself would seem as though they had never been.

How long did he remain thus, face to the ground, a prey to the complete, irremediable sorrow which ends by calming the heart through its very intensity? A sound of voices behind the hedge which separated

him from the garden aroused him abruptly from the paroxysm of suffering which had overwhelmed him. They came from some men walking without a light, measuring their steps, speaking in muffled tones. They came so close to Olivier that he could have touched them if he had risen to his feet.

"He entered here, and went out again by this place the other nights that he came, monseigneur," said one of the voices, a whispering, insinuating, almost inaudible voice. "We cannot possibly miss him."

"Are you certain that none of your men suspect the truth?" said another easily recognizable voice.

"Not one, monseigneur. They think they have to do with a robber."

"Monsieur von Laubach," said a third voice, the voice of an inferior, "the gardener says that the door of the hothouse is open."

"I will go and see," went on the first speaker, while the second imperious voice uttered a "Verfluchter Esel."

This exclamation showed how disagreeable this detail of surveillance was to him who had ordered this trap. A trap for whom? Knowing what he knew, Olivier had not a moment's doubt: the Archduke had learned that a man was with his wife, and he was preparing for his vengeance. He desired an anonymous vengeance, as was shown by the question he had asked of his aid-de-camp, and afterwards his wrath against the "cussed

ass" who had mentioned the hothouse door. The lover was to be killed like a common burglar, "to spare Ely's honor," reflected Olivier, who now got up and, leaning his head forward, listened to the voices dying out in the distance. Doubtless the Archduke and his lieutenant were completing the surrounding of the garden. Pierre was lost.

Pierre was lost! Olivier rose to his feet. The possibility of saving the friend he loved so dearly flashed across his mind. Suppose he entered the garden? Suppose he penetrated as far as the greenhouse door, of which one of the watchers had spoken and whence it was evident the man they were about to kill would issue? Suppose he then rushed out so as to make them believe he was returning to town?

The idea of such a substitution with its self-sacrifice took possession, with irresistible force, of the unhappy man who had so keen a longing for death. He began to walk along, at first in the shades of the bank and then of the wall, which he climbed at almost the same place as his friend had done. Then he walked straight toward the villa, which stood silent and still before him, not a ray of light issuing from the interstices of the shuttered windows.

Olivier regarded it with a strange ardor shining in his eyes. How he longed to be able to pierce the walls with his gaze, to penetrate there in spirit, to appear before him for whom he was risking his life!

Alas! Would his courage for the sacrifice he was about to make have been strong enough to withstand the sight of Ely's room as it was at that moment? Could he have supported the picture presented, in the rays of a pink-shaded lamp, of Ely's head nestling close to Pierre's on the same pillow?

The beautiful arm of the young woman was wound round his neck, and she was saying: —

"I believe I should have died before morning of love and grief if you had not come. But I felt you would come; I felt you would pardon me. When I touched your hand, before I could even see you, all my sufferings were forgotten. And yet, how hard you were to me at first! What cruel things you said! How you made me suffer! But it is all forgotten! Say that all is forgotten! You have taken me to your heart again, you know that I love you, and that you let me love you! Tell me that you love me! Ah, tell me again that you love me as you did upon the boat when we listened to the sighing of the sea! Do you remember, sweet?"

And her eyes sought those of her lover, trying to find in them the light of complete happiness, of which her letter had spoken. Alas! it was not there. An expression of settled sadness and remorse dwelt in their depths.

And this was soon to change to one of terror. At the very instant that Ely pressed her more tender,

more caressing, more loving lips on the young man's eyelids, trying to drive away the melancholy she read in his gaze, a report rang out in the garden, then a second, then a third, shot after shot. A cry rent the air.

Then all was still again. A terrifying silence now reigned. The two lovers looked at each other. The same idea flashed through their minds at the same moment.

"Hide yourself behind the curtains," said Ely. "I will find out what has happened."

She threw a dressing-gown over her shoulders and drew one of the curtains of the alcove before the young man. Then, lamp in hand, she walked toward the window, opened it, and asked in a loud voice:—

"Who is there? What is the matter?"

"Do not be alarmed, my dear," replied a voice whose sinister irony made her shiver. "It was only a robber trying to break into the villa.—He must have two or three bullets in him. We are just looking for him. Don't be frightened. *He will never come back again!* Laubach fired at him point-blank."

Ely closed the window. When she turned she saw that Pierre was already more than half dressed. He was very pale, and his hands were trembling.

"You are not thinking of going?" she cried. "The garden is crowded with men!"

"I must go!" he replied. "They were shooting at Olivier!"

"At Olivier?" she repeated. "You are mad!"

"Yes, at Olivier," he said with an agonized energy; "they took him for me. He must have seen me leave the hotel and he followed me. They were his steps that I heard."

"No, I cannot, I will not let you go," she said, standing in front of the door. "Stop here for a few moments, I implore you. It was not Olivier, it could not be he! They will kill you. Oh, my love, I pray you to stay! Do not go, do not leave me!"

He had now finished dressing. He thrust her rudely to one side, and said: "Let me go! Let me go!" without a look, without a word of adieu.

He had descended the stairs, passed through the hothouse into the garden, before she could move. She remained leaning against the wall where he had thrown her, listening, her head bent forward, listening with an anguish that was maddening. — But there was no further report. Pierre did not meet either the Prince or his men, for they were occupied in hunting for some traces of the first fugitive.

"Ah!" she moaned, "he is safe! — If the other has only escaped!"

Pierre's terror had taken possession of her. Yes, the unknown visitor at whom the men had shot could be no one but Olivier. She had understood too well the Prince's tone. Her husband had learned that she was with her lover. He had laid a trap for him.

Who, then, could have fallen into it instead of Pierre? — For the first time in many years this woman, so broad-minded, so permeated with the spirit of fatalism and nihilism, this woman felt an impulse to appeal to a higher power. She was blinded with terror at what she foresaw if she and Pierre had really brought about the death of the man who had been her lover, of the man who had been Pierre's sole friend; she was so overwhelmed that she fell upon her knees and prayed that this punishment might be spared them.

Vain prayer! As fruitless as the mad flight of her guilty accomplice who tore along the road, halting at intervals to cry, "Olivier! Olivier!"

He received no reply to his calls. At last he arrived at the hotel. He would soon know whether he was not under the influence of some evil dream. What were his feelings when the porter said in answer to his inquiries: —

"Monsieur du Prat? He went out immediately after you had left, sir!"

"Did he ask if I had gone out?"

"Yes, sir. I'm surprised that you did not meet him, sir. He went along the same road immediately after you."

So his presentiments had not deceived him! Olivier had really followed him. Olivier had been taken by surprise in the garden. Was he dead? Was he wounded? Where was he lying helpless?

All night long Hautefeuille wandered about the roads, searching in the ditches, among the hedges, the stones, feeling about on the ground at the foot of the trees. In the morning he was returning, literally mad after his useless researches, when, going toward the hotel by another road, he met two gardeners pushing a hand-cart. In it was laid a human form. He walked up to it and recognized his friend.

Olivier had received two balls in the chest. Upon his face, soiled with the sand of the road, was an expression of infinite sadness. Judging from the place where the gardeners had found him, he must have walked for a quarter of an hour after being wounded. Then his strength had failed him; he had fainted and had died — probably without ever coming to himself again — of a hemorrhage caused by his wounds and the effort he had made.

Where are the dead, our dead? Where go those who have loved us, whom we have loved, those to whom we have been gentle, kind, helpful, those towards whom we have been guilty of inexplicable wrongs, those who have left us before we have ever known if we have been pardoned?

But whether this life of the invisible dead which surround our terrestrial existence be a dream or a reality, it is certain that Ely has never dared to see Pierre or to write to him since that terrible night. Whenever

she takes up the pen to draw near him again, once more something prevents her. And something always stays Pierre's hand when he tries to give her a sign of his existence.

The dead stands between the living, the dead who will never, never disappear.

THE END